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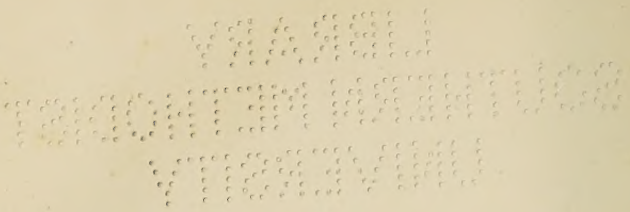

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JOHN WESLEY

HIS LIFE AND HIS WORK



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JOHN WESLEY

HIS LIFE AND HIS WORK

BY

MATTHIEU LELIÈVRE, D.D.

1840-1930

NEW EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY THE

REV. J. W. LELIÈVRE, B.A.

London

CHARLES H. KELLY

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1900

PREFACE



This book is a translation of the Third Edition of my Life of John Wesley, published, for the first time, in 1868, as a prize essay, in a competition opened by the French Conference. The work was received with favour by French readers. The *Revue des Deux Mondes*, perhaps the most influential literary review in Europe, gave an extensive and eulogistic appreciation of the book, from the pen of the eminent academician and statesman, Charles de Rémusat. For the first time, Wesley got access to French literary men, and was judged by one of them with intelligent sympathy. The 5,000 copies of three French editions, scattered in France, prove that this Life of Wesley has met with an equally good reception from the public at large. Another encouragement was the translation of the book into various languages.

Nevertheless, I was not without misgiving about the welcome the fellow-countrymen of Wesley would make to the bold attempt of a foreigner to depict to them the life and the work of that great man. My fears have proved unfounded, and my most sanguine hopes have been surpassed. The able translation by the Rev. A. J. French, B.A., published by the Wesleyan Book-Room, had a very encouraging success. Fifteen thousand copies were sold, and the religious press was unanimously favourable.

I then felt morally obliged to remodel a work too

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rapidly got up to be definitive and of whose shortcomings I was more than any one else aware. Another motive for a thorough revision was the publication in England of important books on Wesley, especially his Life by Luke Tyerman, which, notwithstanding its defects, stands as a monument of patient investigation and invaluable discoveries in ground already so well digged. So I took up again, in mature years, the favourite task of my youth, and I wrote a practically new Life of Wesley.

The enterprising Book-Steward, Rev. Charles H. Kelly, wishing to publish a translation of this enlarged edition, I entrusted it to my brother, the Rev. J. Wesley Lelièvre, B.A., and I now offer this volume to British readers as the conjoint work of brothers, both ministers of the French Methodist Church, sons of one of the early missionaries in France. We beg the indulgence of the reader for any Gallicism they may meet with.

Both the author and the translator owe all they are to British Methodism. Can they hope to partly acquit themselves of their debt by this humble monument raised to the memory of John Wesley?

M. L.

PARIS, *November* 1900.

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JOHN WESLEY

HIS LIFE AND HIS WORK

INTRODUCTION

ENGLAND AT THE BEGINNING OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

In order to thoroughly understand the character of the work accomplished in England by John Wesley and his fellow-workers, it will be necessary to glance at the moral and religious state of the country at the time when those men commenced their labours. This is a subject that deserves a detailed examination.

The initial defect of English Protestantism was its incomplete adhesion to the chief principles of the Reformation. It was its misfortune that Henry VIII. acted as its godfather, a king who had no mind to alter the course of things otherwise than by wresting from the pope the religious supremacy and ascribing it to himself. That strange Reformer used "to burn as heretics those who avowed the tenets of the Reformers, and to hang as traitors those who owned the authority of the pope."[1] Nevertheless, he involuntarily helped on the evangelical movement and unconsciously promoted the spreading of

[1] Lord Macaulay, *The History of England*, etc., chap. i. p. 24.

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the new doctrines among the people. Although very short, the reign of the pious Edward VI. allowed the English Reformation to plunge its roots deeply into the soil, so that the violent winds of persecution which were let loose by Mary Tudor could not eradicate it.

Under the rule of Elizabeth the Church of England was definitely established. It sprung from a compromise between the State claiming supremacy and the Reformed party asserting their evangelical principles. It retained the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the ritual forms of the Roman Church; but it made use of "the vulgar tongue, and invited the illiterate multitude to join its voice to that of the minister."[1] Its Creed, set forth in the Thirty-nine Articles, is so worded that Calvin and Knox might almost have signed it. But the liturgy has many things that remind one of Catholicism, and that were calculated to call forth loud protests.

What was most resisted by those who understood reformation as implying a sincere return to apostolic Christianity, was the pretensions of royalty to supremacy over the Church. Although Elizabeth had "expressly disclaimed that sacerdotal character which her father had assumed,"[1] yet she was officially the head of the Church of England, and that Church, fostered and brought up in the lap of royal power, after narrowly escaping being smothered in its embraces, survived as a political rather than a religious institution.

The clergymen, who were called to instruct the people in the pure faith of the gospel, were quite unfit for that task. Many of them, in order to keep their benefices, had more than once changed creed, according to orders received or to conform to the whims of their sovereign. In the reign of Henry VIII. they had been Catholics, but not Papists; with Edward VI. they became

[1] Macaulay, *The History of England*, etc., chap. i. p. 27.

Protestants; under Mary they relapsed into Roman Catholicism, and under Elizabeth came back again to Protestantism. Hardly two hundred of them, out of nine thousand and four hundred, preferred losing their livings rather than renounce their convictions. Most of them were almost illiterate. Ecclesiastical property having been seized upon by the Government, they had become wretchedly poor. Southey speaks of some who were obliged, on week-days, to turn common tailors, carpenters, or even inn-keepers.[1] Of the country-clergyman, Macaulay says: "Often it was only by toiling on his glebe, by feeding swine, and by loading dung-carts that he could obtain daily bread; nor did his utmost exertions always prevent the bailiffs from taking his concordance and his inkstand in execution. It was a white day on which he was admitted into the kitchen of a great house, and regaled by the servants with cold meat and ale."[2]

The cause of the Reformation in England would have been greatly compromised if it had relied for its propagation exclusively on the State clergy, who, because they had received the order from headquarters, had merely substituted English for Latin in their ritual. Fortunately, side by side with the official reform which was the work of royalty, another was brought about which was due to the people itself. The Puritan movement, for a whole century, was a great nursery for piety and freedom, and we must not, because of its eccentric or narrow ways, undervalue the precious services it rendered to Protestantism. Under the form of Presbyterianism in Scotland, and of Independency in England, that great movement has stamped itself powerfully upon the pages of the religious history of

[1] Southey, *Life of Wesley* (1858), vol. i. p. 195.

[2] Macaulay, *The History of England*, etc., chap. iii. p. 157.

those countries. Goaded by the merciless antagonism of the Stuarts, the Puritan party descended into the arena of political struggle, and for the people's rights took part against the monarch's tyranny. But its momentary triumph under Cromwell, and the noble stand it made in the days of persecution that accompanied the Restoration, could not rescue it at last from the spiritual decay that came upon it.

The political contests in the seventeenth century had in the end two distinct but equally lamentable results. By condemning the Church of England to a real vassalage towards the State, those events effectually barred its way to a spiritual power which was wanting in it from the first. The same circumstances, by constituting Puritanism as a political sect, seemed to dry up the religious sap which had been originally so abundant. Such are the sad effects of revolutions! One might think that they cannot make a nation free without impairing its faith and its morals.

The Revolution of 1688, which had such wonderful political results, appeared for a long time, as it were, barren from a religious point of view. Its necessary complement, a moral and religious reformation, was long delayed, and in the meanwhile the most alarming corruption of manners prevailed. "Never," says a modern writer, "has century risen on Christian England so void of soul and faith as that which opened with Queen Anne, and which reached its misty noon beneath the second George—a dewless night succeeded by a sunless dawn. . . . The Puritans were buried, and the Methodists were not born. . . . The world had the idle, discontented look of the morning after some mad holiday. The reign of buffoonery was past, but the reign of faith and earnestness had not commenced." [1]

[1] *North British Review*, 1847.

The upper classes in England were still going on with the unending revelry begun for them by Charles II. and his courtiers. The royal circle set the example of a depraved life, and noblemen followed it. Lord Chesterfield, writing to his son, taught him the arts of seduction, just as if it were a regular branch in the training of an accomplished gentleman. The fashionable world in London was as dissolute as that of Versailles; but it was grossly so, and lacked the varnish of elegance that disguised corruption in French society. "It was no uncommon thing," says Addison, "for a man who had got drunk in good company, or who had spent the night in dissipation, to relate his adventures the next morning before ladies for whom he entertained the greatest respect."

That quotation enables us also to form some idea of the moral worth of women who could tolerate and even encourage such conversations. But how could they have been better than the men, since in their homes they received the worst training possible? Family life was not at that time what it is now, nor anything like it. A lifeless worship was all the religion to be found there. The only pastimes were novels of a doubtful morality and licentious dramas. If we admit as a fact that the moral level of a period may be safely gauged by referring to its literature, then we must form a very sad opinion concerning the age that successively greeted with applause Wycherley, Congreve, and Dryden himself. For those writers, without shame or scruple, exhibited on the boards indecent manners, vicious characters, and even obscene details. That *pudeur britannique* (English modesty) which is now universally acknowledged did not yet exist.

The venality of political men is one of the most scandalous features of English history in those days.

Marlborough, Russell, Bolingbroke, Shrewsbury, and Halifax could without blushing serve two masters at the same time, the Stuarts and the Orange branch, and receive bribes from both. Robert Walpole, who was the Prime Minister for twenty years, boasted that he knew the exact price for which political consciences might be bought; in fact, he used to spend an enormous amount of money in buying up votes, and thus securing large majorities in Parliament. The passion for money turned many heads. Peers of the realm, State ministers, and the Prince of Wales himself embarked in the most disgraceful speculations in order to get rich. Montesquieu, who visited England about this time, had reason for writing these words: "Here money is greatly prized, honour and virtue but little." He says elsewhere: "The English are now unworthy of their freedom; for they sell it to their king, and if he were to give it back to them they would sell it to him again."[1]

The same Frenchman thus described the utter want of religion he found here: "There is no religion in England. Only four or five members of the House of Commons attend mass or the official sermon. Should anyone mention religion, everybody begins to laugh. A man having said, when I was there, that he believed a certain thing as he would an article of the Creed, all present burst out laughing."[2]

But let us hear the testimony of the English historian Lecky. "A latent scepticism and a widespread indifference might be everywhere traced among the educated classes. There was a common opinion that Christianity was untrue but essential to society, and that on this ground alone it should be retained. The old religion seemed everywhere loosening around the minds

[1] Montesquieu, *Notes sur l'Angleterre*, *Œuvres*, vol. ii. pp. 472, 473.
[2] *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 476.

of men, and it had often no great influence even on its defenders."[1]

For more than a century religious unbelief was fostered among the upper classes in England by recognised teachers and philosophers. Some of them tried to substitute natural religion for Christianity; others leaned more or less visibly towards atheism. From Hobbes, who advocated absolutism in the government and professed scepticism in religious matters, down to Bolingbroke, who, himself an infidel and Voltaire's friend, was the head of the High Church party, a long succession of writers of various talents maintained an incessant attack against the Christian revelation.

Toland, that shallow thinker, assailed Christianity in every possible way; he heaped book upon book, and sophism upon sophism, filling with his declamatory addresses the taverns as well as the drawing-rooms of London. The refined Earl of Shaftesbury neatly threw overboard divine revelation, all the while proffering to it a mock admiration. Collins, so unscrupulous, although he pretended to aim at impartiality, sapped with all his might the foundations of the Christian faith, and brought to bear against it all sorts of weapons, even the most unfair. Woolston, a real fanatic, in his *Discourses upon Miracles*, of which it is said thirty thousand copies were sold, violently assaulted the Gospel accounts, declaring them to be made up of legends and fables; he was the first who openly controverted the fundamental fact of Christ's resurrection. With Tindall, Morgan, and Chubb, English infidelity spoke in a lower tone and with words that concealed scepticism under the veil of a well-feigned moderation.

At that very moment a great moral and religious transformation was in process. Christianity was

[1] Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. ii. p. 529.

defended by learned advocates, such as Bishops Sherlock, Butler, Warburton, Conybeare, and by such laymen as Gilbert West and Lord Lyttleton. But the Methodist revival furnished, in the domain of facts, a still more unanswerable argument.[1] It must be noticed that, as a sort of compensation for the comparative neglect in which the infidel philosophers of England found themselves at that time, they were welcomed by the French, and their writings had the honour of supplying Voltaire and the editors of the *Encyclopédie* with missiles against the Bible.[2]

The common people of England in the eighteenth century were ignorant, rough, and unruly. They had retained, from the political disturbances of the preceding age, a great proneness to seditious gatherings. They alternately and with equal violence sided one day with the Whigs and another day with the Tories. But they never varied in their fierce hatred for Papists and Dissenters. Following upon the judgment of Dr. Sacheverell, who was prosecuted for a sermon levelled at the Government, a formidable riot took place in 1710, and the mob embraced the opportunity to show how much it sympathised with the aforesaid doctor, by burning and sacking several dissenting chapels. In 1780 another riot took place amid the shouts of *No Popery!* The insurgents pulled down the prisons,

[1] A French *professeur*, Edouard Sayous, has published a trustworthy account of English infidelity in the eighteenth century. The title of the volume is, *Les déistes anglais et le christianisme, principalement depuis Toland jusqu à Chubb.* Paris, 1882.

[2] We have found in the British Museum an autograph letter of Voltaire, written from *Les Délices*, 16th January 1760, in which he avows himself as the disciple of the English philosophers. That note was addressed to George Keate, and is written in English. We quote a few lines: "I am confident nobody in the world looks with a greater veneration on your good philosophers, on the crowd of your good authors, and I am these thirty years the disciple of your way of thinking."

released the criminals, and were for three whole days the masters of the metropolis, where they burned, pilfered, and massacred as they liked. "Casks of gin were stove in, and their contents ran in streams along the streets. Women and children on their knees drank it, until some of them died. Some raved, others sank stupified to the ground, remaining there until they were consumed or crushed under the crumbling walls of the houses set on fire."[1] The coronation of George I. provoked in various parts of England a show of hostile feelings. Some drank the Pretender's health; others burned the king in effigy: elsewhere, a few Nonconformist meeting-houses were pillaged; in other places, the mob gave a sound beating to anyone who refused to shout *King James for ever!* And, on their part, the upholders of the House of Hanover burned the effigies of the pope and of the Pretender, and had regular encounters with the Jacobites.

"Even when political parties were quiet, the restless and depraved young men who assiduously frequented coffee-houses proved a perfect plague for the public. They insulted respectable females, they got up quarrels with quiet people, they elbowed passers-by so as to push them into the gutter. Such were the most innocent amusements of those ruffians who soon, under the name of Mohawks, carried terror all over London. At night, when they had drunk heavily, they sallied out into the streets sword in hand, upsetting and wounding all they met. If it was a woman they overtook, she was exposed to be thrust into a cask and sent rolling down a hill. After sundown it was not prudent to venture abroad in London unless you were followed by a sufficient escort. But if you escaped from the Mohawks, you had still a chance of falling in with robbers. The

[1] Taine, *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*, vol. iii. p. 287.

newspapers reported that, between 20th January and 10th February 1720, there were in London or in the neighbourhood some thirty attacks committed by armed highwaymen."[1]

Intemperance made frightful ravages among the lower classes. "Gin was introduced in 1684, and half a century later England consumed seven millions of gallons per annum. The signs on the gin-shops, by way of invitation, offered people enough to make them drunk for a penny, enough to make them dead drunk for twopence, and straw to lie upon into the bargain; when they became so intoxicated as to need the latter accommodation, they were carried into the cellar to sleep themselves sober. One could not walk the streets of London without meeting miserable creatures lying insensible upon the pavement, whom the charity of the passers-by alone saved from being stifled in the mud or crushed beneath the wheels of the vehicles."[2] One in every six houses in London was used as a tavern in 1736. Parliament vainly strove to interdict the sale of the liquid poison; a clandestine commerce in the article sprang up in all parts of England. If any gave information of these frauds upon the customs, the people then threw them into the river; and their attitude became so menacing that the House of Commons was compelled to repeal the law.

The rural districts, though less demoralised, were in a state bordering on barbarism. The colliery population, so improved in the present day, were no better than savages. Crushed under the burden of badly paid work, their life was wretched; and when Sunday came, they did not even think of going to church, and nobody bade

[1] Cornélis de Witt, *La Société française et la Société anglaise au XVIII^e siècle*, p. 190.

[2] Taine, *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*, vol. iii. p. 256.

them go. Rough games, fighting, and the tavern were the only pleasures they knew. Drunkenness and debauchery were everywhere rampant. Many superstitions, remnants of Popery, still lingered two centuries after the Reformation. The Devonshire peasantry taught their children prayers to the saints. In Wales, many Druidical customs were yet in force. Old houses were popularly believed to be haunted by evil spirits; sorcerers, fortune-tellers, and adventurers of every description plied their lucrative arts in broad daylight. Few could read, and as to writing, that was a luxury for a lord. In 1715 the whole kingdom had only 1193 primary schools, with 26,920 children attending them. In all justice, we must add, however, that at this period the whole rural population of Europe was not more advanced.

This then was the people, so degraded and depraved, that Methodism undertook to reform. The whole country seemed to have reached the extreme limit of degradation, which leaves a nation no alternative but utter destruction, unless it consent to commence a new life. The moral degeneracy we have just described fully justifies the statement of a modern writer, himself a Churchman, who says that England had fallen into utter paganism when Wesley appeared.[1]

But what were the efforts made by the healthier part of the nation in order to apply a remedy to such crying moral evils? Alas! the literature of that period was, as a rule, accessory to the general declension. We must notice, however, a most interesting attempt at a reaction in that special field. Some distinguished writers, such as Steele, Addison, Berkeley, and Johnson, strove to rear a barrier against the encroachments of vice. In certain

[1] Isaac Taylor, *Wesley and Methodism*, as quoted by Stevens, *History of Methodism* (New York, 1858), vol. i. p. 30.

periodical publications, written in a lively and satirical style, they lashed the vices and extravagances of the age with a freedom that does them credit. Those pamphlets enjoyed great popularity, and no doubt did some good, but it was superficial. By rendering vice ridiculous they made men blush, but vice itself they could not scare away.

Towards the close of the seventeenth century a few influential members of the Established Church formed themselves into a "Society for the Reformation of Manners." Queen Mary consented to be the patron of that society, and she ordered that the ancient laws for the suppression of scandalous vice should be vigorously carried out. Thanks to the efforts of the association, hundreds of houses of ill-fame were closed in London, and multitudes of gamblers, common swearers, and disorderly persons were fined, imprisoned, or publicly whipped. But these severe measures punished only the common herd of sinners, and usually spared those of a higher grade. De Foe wittily compares these laws to cobwebs which catch the little flies and let the big ones escape. Still, this quickening of the national conscience was a hopeful augury, and a strong protest against the debasement of morals which set in at the Restoration.[1]

Closely allied to this good work, and indeed anticipating it by several years, was the organisation of small religious societies by three pious clergymen of the Anglican Church, Horneck, Smithies, and Beveridge. A large number of young people having been converted through their instrumentality, they counselled them "to

[1] The Society for the Reformation of Manners lasted about forty years. When Methodism appeared it was hardly more than a name. But the new movement seems to have helped its revival. John Wesley preached before it in 1763, as his father had done in 1698; but he had the great sorrow to witness its complete breaking up in 1766.

meet once a week and hold conversations that might tend to mutual edification." This they accordingly did, and in addition raised funds to be bestowed on charitable objects. They visited the sick and the prisoners, they taught the children ; and it is said that by their persevering efforts a hundred schools were established in London and its vicinity. For some time these little societies were centres of zealous religious life, although their action was confined within too narrow limits. Had they possessed a more aggressive and enterprising character, they might have put forward the religious awakening of the nation by half a century. Unfortunately, they almost wholly prohibited evangelical action, properly so called, for fear of interfering with the rights of the clergy. Wesley found them almost extinct, but he availed himself of the ideas of Horneck and of his friends to develop them and make them more fruitful.[1]

The clergy of the National Church did little to support the movement. Social standing had been materially improved, and young men in the best families were drawn by the bait of lucrative livings. But from a religious point of view the level was generally low. They had taken an active part in the political strifes following the Revolution, and more than one virulent pamphlet had issued from those parsonages which might

[1] The rules of those societies stipulated that all members must belong to the Established Church ; that they must meet once a week in order to promote mutual encouragement ; that they must carefully eschew all discussions, political and otherwise ; that each member must contribute weekly in order to accomplish charitable purposes ; that any member who, without good reasons, failed to attend four meetings in succession would be considered as having withdrawn ; that no one should be admitted as a member before they had inquired into his motives and manner of life ; and lastly, that all members were expected to pray several times every day, to receive the Holy Communion at least once in the month, and to remember the association in their private devotions.

have been expected to bring forth only words of peace. In the ranks of the light, bantering, and occasionally indecent *literateurs* of that time, numerous representatives of the clerical world were to be found; the best known are Swift and Sterne. It was an ordinary case for clergymen to be worldly and devoid of any seriousness of manners; parishes might account themselves fortunate when their parsons were not addicted to drinking and to a dissolute life. Although Voltaire declared that, as compared with a Parisian *abbé*, "the Anglican parson might be accounted a perfect Cato," he said also this: "The Church of England priests go now and then to taverns, custom allowing them to do so; they even get drunk, but it is done gravely and without giving any scandal."[1] One of them, it is related, having been charged by his bishop with being occasionally drunk, excused himself by saying that he always took care not to get into that state at the time when he had to fulfil the duties of his ministry.[2]

Here and there, no doubt, a few pious and devoted clergymen could be found, but the majority confined themselves to the mechanical duties of their profession. Even those who secretly lamented the sad state of their Church were too timid to put themselves forward in a work of reform. Most of them, in fact, dared not associate with Wesley and his friends when a revival began through their instrumentality. Science and talent were not wanting, certainly, in the Anglican ministry of the eighteenth century, since it counted in its ranks such theologians as William Sherlock, Daniel Waterland, Bishop Butler, and Dean Prideaux. What was wanting among them was a due sense of the people's religious

[1] Voltaire's *Works*, vol. xxiv. pp. 25 and 27.

[2] Stoughton, *Religion in England under Queen Anne and the Georges*, vol. i. chap. iv. Southey, *Life of Wesley*, vol. i. p. 201.

wants, and still more, that living faith that acts upon souls.

Sermons in those times were generally mere moral essays, rather poor and read in the coldest and dullest tones. A few men, especially in large towns, strove after celebrity as great preachers, and purchased a fleeting renown by pandering to the public taste and diluting the easy themes of natural religion in a flood of sentimental phrases. Some, like Dr. Samuel Clarke and William Whiston, propagated Arian doctrines, and even attracted Voltaire's notice, who said of them: "The disciples of Arius have not chosen a favourable moment for re-appearing, for in this age everybody has a surfeit of controversies and of sects."[1] Even orthodox preachers, and the best of them, like Burnet, Atterbury, Blackall, Bentley, and Waterland, were visibly lacking in spiritual power. The vital doctrines of the gospel were not the foundation-stone of their teachings: hence these were no longer popular and impressive.

This decay of the Established Church had long engaged the attention of serious minds, and awakened the gravest solicitude. The pious Archbishop Leighton said in his energetic way: "The Church is a fair carcase without a spirit." The eloquent lament of Bishop Burnet has often been quoted: "I am in the seventieth year of my age, and as I cannot speak long in this world in any sort, so I cannot hope for a more solemn occasion than this of speaking with all due freedom. . . . I cannot look on without the deepest concern when I see the imminent ruin hanging over this Church."[2] Then he speaks of the ignorance of the clergy, of their slight esteem for the Scriptures, and their general disposition to engage in party politics and neglect the

[1] Voltaire's *Works*, vol. xxiv. p. 32.

[2] Burnet, *Pastoral Care*, Preface to the 3rd ed., 1713.

care of souls. Archbishop Secker and Bishops Gibson and Butler pass an equally severe judgment on the Church and clergy of the day.[1]

The Nonconformists had been preserved from so deep a delusion, both by their principles and by the vigorous vein of piety which still pervaded their ranks. Those were not dead Churches that reckoned among them such men as Isaac Watts, the celebrated hymn-writer, Nathaniel Lardner, the distinguished apologist, Philip Doddridge, the author of several works full of unction and piety, Matthew Henry, the eminent commentator, and such preachers as Edmund Calamy, James Foster, and Samuel Chandler. Unhappily, the excitements of the contests with the Establishment, which often bore a political character, together with endless internal disputes, induced a general inattention to the work of spiritual aggression. Dr. Stoughton writes on that point: "A spirit of indifference respecting the masses of the people infected the respectable congregations gathered within the walls of Protestant meeting-houses."[2] Orthodoxy itself was often wanting in those churches, and Arianism sounded from many pulpits which should have been better fenced. That state of spiritual declension constrained the leaders of Dissent to express similar regrets to those which fell from their Episcopal brethren. Dr. Guyse says: "The religion of nature makes up the darling topics of our age; and the religion of Jesus is valued only for the sake of that, and only so far as it carries on the light of nature, and is a bare improvement of that kind of light. All that is distinctively Christian or peculiar to Christ is waived and banished and despised." Isaac Watts, Abraham Taylor,

[1] See quotations in Thomas Jackson's *Centenary of Wesleyan Methodism*, pp. 8–16.

[2] Stoughton, *Religion in England*, vol. i. chap. vii.

John Hurrion afford plentiful proofs of that state of things.[1]

The moral and religious state of Great Britain at that time make it plainly visible that a second Reformation was wanted. A few far-sighted men felt it must be coming. Voltaire, at all events, did not; for he says: "They are so disgusted in England with that kind of thing, that a new religion, or an old one revived, would scarcely make its fortune."[2] Events soon offered a striking refutation of his statement; for at the same time that he was announcing the decline of Christianity and predicting its overthrow, a few pious Oxford students, of whom Wesley was one, were forming an association that was to be the cradle, if not of a "new religion," yet of an "old religion revived."

Most remarkable coincidence! The two men who were destined to act more powerfully than any others upon their contemporaries, at the same moment trod the soil of Britain,[3] and, in sight of a great nation corroded by scepticism and materialism, formed resolutions of an exactly opposite character. The one, mistaking the licence of the wits for true liberty, determined to import into France the principles and methods of English infidelity; the other, profoundly impressed by the evils under which his country groaned, resolved to attempt its recovery through the gospel. Those who met in social intercourse the young Parisian exile with his biting wit, and the young Oxford collegian with his grave demeanour, did not suspect that they looked on men who would move the age, though in opposite

[1] Jackson, *Centenary*, etc., pp. 16–22.

[2] Voltaire, *Letters from England*, *Œuvres*, vol. xxiv. p. 32.

[3] Voltaire's sojourn in England commenced in 1726, and lasted three years, thus coinciding exactly with the beginning of the Methodist movement at Oxford.

directions, and that their conflicting labours would create a universal commotion. For our part, judging of their work by results, we do not hesitate to say that we infinitely prefer the work of the great servant of Jesus Christ to that of the great philosopher: the one labouring to bring back souls to God, the other to turn them away; the one fighting for God, the other fighting against Him. And while every day more fully discloses the pernicious character of Voltaire's work, every day demonstrates more strikingly the excellence of that performed by Wesley.

Book First

THE PREPARATION
(1703–1738)

CHAPTER I

THE EPWORTH PARSONAGE

(1703–1714)

RIGHT on the north-western boundary of Lincolnshire lies a small tract of land called the Isle of Axholme. Its area is about one hundred and twenty square miles, and its title of isle (or island) is derived from the fact of its being encompassed by waters as with a girdle. This district, now redeemed from its former state of marshes or fens, and enriched by husbandry, has become one of the most fertile parts of the country. It is divided into seven parishes. The most important and its chief town is Epworth. It has a population of two thousand souls; it is irregularly built, but pleasantly situated along the slopes of a hillock. The parish church is dedicated to St. Andrew, and commands an extensive view of a pleasant country.

There, on the 17th of June 1703,[1] JOHN WESLEY was born in the parsonage connected with the church, his father being the rector of the parish at that time. There also he spent the early years of his life, in the midst of spiritual circumstances that contributed to make him what he became. Although born within the

[1] It must be observed that, in consequence of the Gregorian calendar having been accepted in England only in 1751, this date really corresponds to the 28th of June.

pale of the Church of England, John Wesley belonged, both on the paternal and maternal side, to the noble stock of the Puritans, which, in the former century, had given birth in England to so many heroically minded men.

His great-grandfather on the paternal side, Bartholomew Wesley (the name was originally spelt Westley), had studied both divinity and physics at the University of Oxford. After the Restoration he was ejected from his living, and led the restless life of a wanderer, practising the medical profession in order to supply his wants, and preaching whenever an opportunity offered. The son of Bartholomew Wesley was called John, like his illustrious grandson. That son became a Master of Arts in the University of Oxford, and exercised the functions of the Christian ministry under the Protectorate of Cromwell, but he was never ordained, and remained all his life simply an evangelist, as were the men whom his grandson scattered all over England. His fate was similar to that of his father; for he was one of the victims of the religious oppression which soon followed the accession of Charles II. He was one among the two thousand ministers who, on the 24th of August 1662, gave up their livings rather than submit to the new ecclesiastical laws. Several times he was cast into prison, and he could no longer act as a minister except in secret. The hardships he endured and the dangers he was exposed to had the effect of shortening his life; he died at forty-two,[1] leaving several young children, one of whom was Samuel, the father of the Founder of Methodism.

Samuel Wesley, having been early thrown upon his

[1] The Nonconformist historian Calamy says that he was thirty-three when he died; but Stevenson, in his *Wesley Family*, confirms the statement we have made.

own resources, abandoned the ecclesiastical principles of his parents, and entered the Oxford University as a poor student. There he qualified himself for service in the Established Church, maintaining himself partly by his literary work and partly by serving a wealthy student. The favour of Queen Mary, to whom he had dedicated one of his books, procured for him in 1696 the living of Epworth, where he remained until his death in 1735. Although shut up in his parsonage, he took a large share in the controversies of his time. He was able to mark his own path among the various political and religious parties; he had very pronounced opinions, and he could defend them most vigorously. His pen was used for the furtherance of every object that enlisted the sympathy of his ardent and generous soul. His mind was comprehensive rather than deep, and his productions embraced a great diversity of topics: he wrote political and religious pamphlets, newspaper articles, poems, commentaries, and theological essays, but none of the works he published would have sufficed to rescue his name from oblivion and make it immortal. But his sons did that for him, and they remain as his most brilliant title in the eyes of the world, since some at least of the qualities which made the sons eminent may be traced up to their father.

In Samuel Wesley we recognise, at the same time, both the qualities and the defects of a mind generous, but inclined to exaggeration and imperfectly balanced. His courage carried him to imprudence; his broadness of view degenerated into changeableness, his warmth into violence, his liberality into prodigality; his devotedness to his Church became bigotry. With an intense wish to do good, he zealously fulfilled his pastoral duties; but the severity of his reprehensions and his attempt to enforce a discipline which had become obsolete, made

his parishioners so angry that they persecuted him bitterly. One of them had him sent to gaol for a trifling debt which he could not just then pay. Others maimed his cows and his watch-dog. Some of them, as we shall see, carried their malice so far as to set fire to the parsonage.

The Epworth rector was, no doubt, for his children a pattern of all sorts of virtues; but he could only impart to them an imperfect religious life. He exhorted them to lead a pure life, but he was not able to point them to the true source of such a life, faith from the heart in Jesus Christ. In the later years of his life, however, his soul seemed to become more fully enlightened, and his letters to his sons, who were then at the university, show that he had made real progress in his view of spiritual things. He had a kind of prophetic presentiment of the important religious revolution which was about to break forth, and of which his sons were to be the chief apostles. On his deathbed he said to his son Charles: "Be steady; the Christian faith will surely revive in this kingdom; you will see it, though I shall not." He was one of those few Christians who, even at this early period of the eighteenth century, coveted for their country the honour of large missionary enterprises. About 1705 he offered himself to the Government as a missionary for India. But the age was not ripe for such a movement; and, in order to realise that idea, it was necessary that it should be taken up, not by Government but by the Church, when it had been thoroughly roused from its slumber.

However great may have been the paternal influence in the formation of John Wesley's soul and character, there is no doubt that his moral and religious development was still more largely owing to the influence of his pious mother. It has been truly said that Sussanah

Wesley was the mother not only of Wesley, but of Methodism itself. She was a daughter of Dr. Annesley, one of the most distinguished theologians of the Puritan school, and one of those who resigned in 1662. Her intellect was remarkably powerful, and she received a complete education, including foreign languages, philosophy, theology, and ecclesiastical questions: she studied them all. She had tried to form an independent judgment upon controverted matters. In the theological field she had to pass through a painful crisis of doubt before her faith rested upon an immovable foundation. After seriously investigating the subject, she gave up her family's ecclesiastical views and adhered to the Church of England. In politics she remained a fervid Jacobite, whilst her husband was strongly in favour of the new dynasty. Rivalling in learning and in piety the ladies of the Reformation, she could not remain indifferent to the intellectual progress of her children in any department. She combined in equal measure the desire for advancement which marks an enlightened mind, and the strong, practical sense which proceeds from a well balanced mind. Contrary to what sometimes happens among the gentler sex, the unwonted development of the mental powers had in no degree arrested that of the affections. Extraordinary as she was in regard to intellect, it was more especially as a wife and a mother that Susannah Wesley excelled. If her loving heart throbbed in sympathy with her husband's trials, she found in her conscientious will the strength to inspire him with brave resolutions. Herself the mother of nineteen children, she had all the virtues, as well as all the burdens, belonging to such a position. Her affection for her children was not a mere selfish worship; she regarded them as seed-plots which it was her duty to cultivate with jealous watchfulness. When death came

to reap down before her eyes the field tended with so much love, she bowed to the will of God. The outline of Susannah Wesley's character shows firmer and clearer in her deep sorrows than in her palmiest days.

Under the humble roof of the Epworth rectory the family life wore an aspect at once charming and austere. The training and early instruction of the children devolved on the intelligent and pious mother of whom we have just spoken. Constantly governed by a sense of her responsibility, it was hers to watch the moral and physical development of the twelve or thirteen children who survived the perils of infancy; it was hers to hold with steady hand the reins of this little government, keeping her eye on everything and communicating everywhere the impulsion of her own methodical spirit. Mrs. Wesley guarded carefully against leaving the direction of her children to chance. Having pondered in her own mind the best methods of instruction, she laid down fixed rules which she followed with the utmost exactness. Thus the soul of John Wesley was cast in the mould of a strictly Christian education, and received at home its most effective training. It will not be, therefore, an idle task to describe his mother's plan in a few words.

In this model family the children were subjected to discipline from their most tender years. Their hours of sleeping and eating were determined by rule, to which the very infants had to submit like the rest. At an early period they acquired habits of quietness rarely to be met with in large families: all screaming was strictly forbidden. As the will of each child began to manifest itself, it became the object of special attention. "If you wish to train your children aright," said Susannah Wesley, "the first thing to be done is to conquer their

will." Few mothers have succeeded so well in this difficult task. Her ordinary methods were kindness and persuasion; but, if necessary, she had recourse to chastisement. On the other hand, perceiving that "the fear of punishment often tempts children to falsehood," it was her custom always to forgive a fault that had been confessed. Influenced by such principles, Mrs. Wesley rightly required unconditional submission to an authority regulated by the deepest instincts of maternal love.

In the education of her children she had the same fixed principles. Under no pretext, for instance, was a child permitted to learn to read before attaining its fifth year,—an excellent rule, designed not to overtax the immature intellect. But the day after its fifth anniversary was a memorable one in the family history: lessons were commenced in earnest, and the new pupil spent six hours in the schoolroom, at the close of which it was expected to have mastered the alphabet. This brief period, in nearly every instance, sufficed for the accomplishment of the task. At the second lesson the Bible was opened, and the child was taught to spell a portion of that sublime chapter, the first of Genesis. Mrs. Wesley declares that, after three months' practice in this manner, the children could read as well as many who pass for good readers. In order to the attainment of such results, she spared no pains. "I admire your patience," said her husband to her one day; "you have told this child the same thing at least twenty times." "I should have lost my labour," she replied, "if I had only told him nineteen times, since it was only at the twentieth that I succeeded."

Susannah Wesley was an earnest Christian; the spiritual growth of her children was dearer to her heart than their intellectual progress. In their childhood she

strove to acquaint them with the Holy Scriptures: she taught them simple prayers as soon as their lips could pronounce the words. She was anxious personally to impart their earliest religious instruction; and there is still extant a sort of manual which she composed for their use. She regularly devoted one or two hours every week to special conversation with each of them by turn; this little conference was remarkable for intimacy of fellowship, and fostered an openness of spirit which enabled the mother to follow closely the workings of her children's minds. These conversations exercised the most salutary influence on her son John: twenty years later, in a letter to his mother, he gratefully refers to them, asking her to set apart Thursday evening for him as formerly.

In the rapid sketch which we have drawn of the family education, our readers will not fail to have noticed the love of order which so strongly characterised Wesley at a later period, and which he inherited from his mother. It may also be said that in this family-school he acquired most of those great qualities which he ultimately displayed in the work to which God called him. While yet young he had imbibed lofty ideas concerning life and its duties. He had learned how to improve time and never waste it in unprofitable employment.

It was also from his mother that John Wesley derived the principle of occasionally putting aside stated ways and means in order to benefit the more readily the neighbour's soul. His mother's zeal for evangelisation had been prompted by reading an account of the work done in Malabar by a Danish missionary called Ziegenbalg. Mrs. Wesley, whilst her husband was from home, undertook to hold in her kitchen a simple meeting for worship on Sunday afternoons. It was at first intended only for

the children and servants; but the neighbours begged they might be admitted, and soon as many as two hundred people attended. Samuel Wesley's curate was annoyed by this competition, which he considered as irregular, and wrote to his rector asking him to stop these meetings. But he, having heard through his wife of the good results that followed, declined to interfere, and thus the services went on and the parish was all the better for them. No doubt John Wesley remembered more than once these simple assemblies, held by his mother in their kitchen, when the time came that he himself was prevented from preaching the gospel in churches and obliged to use other places.[1]

Wesley's childhood was not exempt from those trials which, in the order of Divine Providence, play so important a part in the formation of character. More than once he saw stark poverty seated at the family board; and notwithstanding the prodigies of economy performed by his mother, his father died in debt. Death frequently visited their home, and dealt some ruthless blows. On two several occasions also, the parsonage was burnt: the first fire was owing to accident, and was only partial; but the second time the whole house was consumed by the flames, and this fire was the work of some wicked and incorrigible parishioners, who, in order to take their revenge upon their minister for reproving them, did not hesitate to burn his house over his head, thus exposing his family to the risk of a frightful death.

It was on the 9th of February 1709, towards midnight, that the fire broke out. A little girl of twelve, awakened by the sparks which fell upon her feet, gave the alarm. Cries from without at the same moment roused everyone in the house. It was time; the devour-

[1] For further details on Susannah Wesley, see John Kirk, *The Mother of the Wesleys*, London, 1864.

ing element had already made considerable progress, and rendered nearly all the means of egress unavailable. The rector flew to the room where his children slept, and with the aid of a servant enabled them to make their escape by the windows and by the door that led to the garden. His wife, staying behind to ensure the safety of the younger children, had to force her way through the flames. Thrice she was beaten back by their fierceness, but at last, gathering up her remaining strength and putting her trust in God, she rushed through the fire and escaped, with no further injury than some burns on her face and hands.

One child, however, was still missing. Little John was fast asleep in his bed, having been forgotten in the midst of the general alarm. His father, discovering his absence, made several attempts to reach him through the flames, but was compelled to retreat before their fury. Then, falling on his knees, he commended his child's soul into the hands of God. Meanwhile the boy, waking from his sleep, flew to the window, where he was soon observed by those below. There being no time to fetch a ladder, one man mounted the shoulders of another, and rescued the child at the very moment that the roof fell in with a tremendous crash. "Come, neighbours," exclaimed the father, as his son was deposited safe and sound in his arms, "let us kneel down; let us give thanks to God: He has given me all my eight children; let the house go, I am rich enough."

To the end of his life John Wesley remembered this providential deliverance. Under one of his portraits he had engraved the picture of a house in flames, with the inscription, "Is not this a brand plucked from the burning?"

From that moment his pious mother, so she tells us, formed the resolution "to watch with particular care over

a child whom God had spared in so much mercy." She strove to inspire him with the conviction that he belonged, body and soul, to that God whose Fatherly hand had been so visibly stretched forth in his defence. Her efforts were rewarded by the early piety of the child, who gave proof of being under strong religious impressions at an age when others think of little else but the amusements of childhood. Hence his father believed it his duty to admit him to the Holy Sacrament when he was only eight years old.

When the boy was about nine years old he fell ill with the smallpox, and he bore his sufferings with so much courage that his mother spoke thus of him in a letter to her husband, who was then in London: "John has borne his sufferings bravely, like a man, like a true Christian, without uttering a single murmur."

His character as a child already revealed some features which will re-appear in the man. Dr. Clarke relates that once, when asked what he would eat, he answered, "Thank you, I must think." His mother used to say, "John will never do anything that he cannot give a good reason for."

CHAPTER II

CHARTER-HOUSE AND OXFORD

(1714–1729)

Susannah Wesley had been the first educator of her children. At the age of ten and a half, John passed from under the guidance of his accomplished mother into college life. On 28th January 1714 he was nominated a pupil at Charter-house, London, an old and distinguished school, founded a century before by a rich merchant, Thomas Sutton, on the premises formerly occupied by a Carthusian monastery. The nomination was due to the patronage of the Duke of Buckingham, at that time the lord-chamberlain of the royal household.

It was considered a great privilege for the son of a country clergyman to be admitted to this school, which was almost exclusively reserved for the children of the wealthy. It is true, he had to pay a kind of ransom for the honour, in the shape of petty annoyances inflicted by his older and richer comrades. His school-days were a time of much privation. The elder boys were suffered to eat up not only their own portion of animal food, but the portions also allowed to the junior boys.[1] The boy took this annoyance with a good amount of philosophy, and he said later: "From

[1] Moore, *Life of Wesley*, vol. i. p. 117.

ten to fourteen I had little but bread to eat, and not great plenty of that. I believe this was so far from hurting me, that it laid the foundation of lasting health."[1] These trials were not useless for the shaping of his character. "Wesley learned as a boy," says Isaac Taylor, "to suffer wrongfully with a cheerful patience, and to conform himself to cruel despotisms without acquiring either the slave's temper or the despot's."[2] Though he was only sixteen years of age when he left the school, John Wesley had, by his energy of character and his progress in learning, acquired a high position in the esteem of his masters and of his comrades. His elder brother, Samuel, who at the same time was at Westminster School as usher, wrote to his father: "Jack is with me, and a brave boy, learning Hebrew as fast as he can."[3]

Unhappily the child's piety seemed to undergo a sort of declension during this period of his life. He persevered in reading the Bible and saying his prayers morning and evening. But he was "more negligent than before," and guilty of what he knew to be "outward sins, though they were not scandalous in the eye of the world." He writes concerning this Charter-house period: "What I now hoped to be saved by was—(1) Not being so bad as other people; (2) having still a kindness for religion; and (3) reading the Bible, going to church, and saying my prayers."[4]

Wesley cherished a lifelong feeling of affection for the school, and he loved, in after-life, to visit the old cloisters where he spent five years of his boyhood.

He was elected to Christ Church, Oxford, on 24th June

[1] Wesley's *Journal*, June 28, 1770.
[2] Isaac Taylor, *Wesley and Methodism*, p. 23.
[3] Whitehead, *Life of Wesley*, i. 381.
[4] Wesley's *Works*, vol. i. p. 98.

able occasion for tears than can be met with in a tragedy.

"Now I mention this, it calls to mind your letter to your father about taking orders. I was much pleased with it, and liked the proposal well; but it is an unhappiness almost peculiar to our family, that your father and I seldom think alike. I approve the disposition of your mind, and think the sooner you are a deacon the better; because it may be an inducement to greater application in the study of practical divinity, which I humbly conceive is the best study for candidates for orders. Mr. Wesley differs from me, and would engage you, I believe, in critical learning, which, though accidentally of use, is in nowise preferable to the other. I earnestly pray God to avert that great evil from you of engaging in trifling studies to the neglect of such as are absolutely necessary. I dare advise nothing: God Almighty direct and bless you!

"SUSANNAH WESLEY."[1]

His mother's advice, expressed in so lucid a manner, had a considerable influence over John Wesley, who from that time, whilst pursuing with zeal the study of theology, paid more attention to his inward life. The *Imitation of Jesus Christ*, and the *Rules for Holy Living and Dying*, by Jeremy Taylor,[2] became his devotional books. The *Imitation* taught him "that true religion was seated in the heart, and that God's law extended to all our thoughts, as well as words and actions."[3] He resolved to attain that inward and out-

[1] Tyerman, *Life of Wesley*, vol. i. p. 32.

[2] Jeremy Taylor (1613–1667) was the chaplain of Archbishop Laud and of King Charles I. in succession, then Bishop of Dromore and Vice-Chancellor of Dublin University: he wrote many devotional books which obtained great success, and several of which are even now much esteemed.

[3] Wesley's *Works*, vol. i. p. 99.

ward holiness, which seemed to come up to him, like a subtle perfume, from those cloister-written pages. He formed more regular habits of devotion, remaining secluded every day for one or two hours, and communicating once a week.

He did not, however, blindly put his whole trust in those favourite writers, but mentioned to his mother several points on which he thought it his duty to differ from them. For instance, a passage in the *Imitation* did not suit him, because it seemed to say that God had from all eternity consigned to damnation a part of mankind. His mother, whose opinion he had asked, declared the dogma of unconditional predestination "impious and blasphemous": she also frankly gave as her judgment that Kempis, the author of the *Imitation*, was "an honest weak man, that had more zeal than knowledge."[1]

A little later (18th June 1725), having met, in Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying*, with the statement that "whether God has forgiven us or no, we know not," Wesley wrote to his mother, saying: "Now, surely these graces are not of so little force as that we cannot perceive whether we have them or not; if we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us, which He will not do unless we are regenerate, certainly we must be sensible of it. If we can never have any certainty of our being in a state of salvation, good reason it is that every moment should be spent, not in joy, but in fear and trembling; and then, undoubtedly, in this life we are of all men most miserable."[2]

It is a remarkable fact that this young man of twenty-two, who was now beginning to study the deep questions of spiritual life in the school of the *Imitation*

[1] Moore's *Life of Wesley*, vol. i. p. 125.
[2] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xii. p. 9.

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[2] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xii. p. 9.

and of Jeremy Taylor, at once parted company with his two guides in asserting two great doctrines which became the leading features of his religious system, namely, the love of God for all men, and the Christian's privilege of enjoying a consciousness of salvation. However, this disagreement with his authors never diminished the esteem and grateful love which Wesley entertained, to the end of his life, for those books, which had, as it were, revealed to him a new world, the world of a life hidden in God. Later on he published both of them in his "Christian Library." As to the "Christian's Pattern," as he called the *Imitation*, he says: "The nature and extent of inward religion, the religion of the heart, now appeared to me in a stronger light than ever it had done before. I saw that giving even all my life to God (supposing it possible to do this and go no further) would profit me nothing, unless I gave my heart, yea, all my heart, to Him."[1] As to the *Rules*, this is what he says: "In reading several parts of this book I was exceedingly affected; that part in particular which relates to purity of intention. Instantly I resolved to dedicate all my life to God, all my thoughts, and words, and actions."[1] We may add, that it was in order to follow the advice given by Dr. Taylor that Wesley began to write a *Journal*, which he kept on to the end of his life, and which is the richest and most reliable mine of information we possess concerning his life and his work.

The spiritual crisis to which he had now come was to be both long and sharp. Thirteen years had to pass before he attained to that intimate assurance of salvation which he already saw as a possible thing. Neither of his favourite authors could show him the way to it, and his mother herself, although her remarkable letters

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xi. p. 366.

were very useful to him at that time, had only vague notions as to that faith through which a sinner may be justified.

On Sunday, 19th September 1725, Wesley was ordained deacon by Bishop Potter. He preached for the first time at South Leigh, a small place three miles from Witney. Shortly after he also gave a funeral sermon at Epworth, his father's parish. In March 1726 he was elected Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford. Besides the honour, that title conferred upon him various material advantages, and placed him in an independent position.

Being thus transferred from one college to the other, Wesley determined to choose his new companions with care, and to be actuated therein solely by the desire to preserve and improve his piety.

The following summer was spent at home, where he helped his father in his pastoral work, and pursued his studies with the utmost zeal. It was at that time he wrote that beautiful metrical paraphrase of Psalm civ., which, taken in connection with several fine hymns he composed, shows that John Wesley possessed a first-class poetical gift, which might have ensured for him the renown of a "sweet psalmist of Israel" had he not rather to leave that function to his brother Charles, and to devote his own life to missionary activity, thus following his mother's advice, who wrote to him, "Make poetry your diversion, but not your business." [1]

When he returned to Oxford in September 1726, Wesley met with new academical distinctions. He was acknowledged by all to be a man of literary taste and talents, and an excellent critic in the learned languages, as well as a superior debater in philosophical discussions. On 6th November he was chosen Greek lecturer and

[1] Whitehead, *Life of Wesley*, vol. i. p. 407.

"Moderator of the Classes." He was then only twenty-three years of age. Three months later he took his degree of Master of Arts, after presenting three Latin theses, which are known to us only by their titles, *De Anima brutorum*, *De Julio Cæsare*, *De amore Dei*.

But he went on with his studies even then with a true enthusiasm, following henceforth a strict plan for improving his time. Monday and Tuesday were set apart for Greek and Latin; Wednesday for Logic and Ethics; Thursday for Hebrew and Arabic; Friday for Metaphysics and Natural Philosophy; Saturday for Oratory and Poetry; as to Sunday, it was devoted to Divinity. There were also seasons reserved for French and for Mathematics. When he wrote to his mother in order to communicate this programme, he added these reflections: "I am perfectly come over to your opinion, that there are many truths it is not worth while to know. Curiosity, indeed, might be a sufficient plea for our laying out some time upon them, if we had half a dozen centuries of life to come; but methinks it is great ill-husbandry to spend a considerable part of the small pittance now allowed us in what makes neither a quick nor a sure return." [1]

A secret instinct was even then impelling him towards an active life as his true calling, and it is made manifest in a letter he wrote about that time concerning a very interesting fact.[2] He was preparing to attend a young lady's funeral, in company with a young gentleman with whom he was intimate, when he felt called to beseech him to become "a whole Christian." This effort was not vain, for the young man became very serious, and a year and a half later died in Christian peace and hope. That was the first conversion obtained by Wesley, and

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xii. p. 9. [2] *Ibid.* p. 10.

that fruit of his work was gathered at a time when he did not himself clearly possess saving faith.

His inward life was still an object of constant preoccupation. He was enlightened by reading William Law's *Christian Perfection* and his *Serious Call*.[1] "Although I was much offended at many parts of both, yet they convinced me more than ever of the exceeding height and breadth and depth of the law of God. The light flowed in so mightily upon my soul, that everything appeared in a new view. I cried to God for help, and resolved not to prolong the time of obeying Him as I had never done before. And by my continued endeavour to keep His whole law, inward and outward, to the utmost of my power, I was persuaded that I should be accepted of Him, and that I was even then in a state of salvation."[2]

His endeavours were sincere, and if ever man, by his own power, could have fulfilled the moral law, then Wesley would have done it. He not only lived the purest and most austere life, but he frequently partook of the Lord's Supper, and devoted several hours every day to religious exercises and to studying the Holy Scriptures in the original languages. Notwithstanding all those efforts, his idea of Christian life remained imperfect. "I was utterly ignorant of the nature and condition of justification. Sometimes I confounded it with sanctification; at other times I had some confused notion about the forgiveness of sins, but then I took it for granted the time of this must be either the hour of

[1] William Law was born in 1686 and died in 1761. He was compelled to leave the University of Oxford because he refused the oath at the accession of King George I. He was tutor to Edward Gibbon, father of the historian. He is chiefly known by the devotional books he wrote, and which had a great circulation in England. But his mystic tendencies became more and more pronounced as he published his successful writings, and at last he became a fervent adept of Jacob Boehme.

[2] Wesley's *Works*, vol. i. p. 99.

death or the day of judgment. I was equally ignorant of the nature of saving faith; apprehending it to mean no more than a firm assent to all the propositions contained in the Old and New Testaments." [1]

In the month of August 1727, the Epworth rector, weighed down by the infirmities of age, desired his son John to return home and assist him as his curate. John Wesley remained there until November 1729. But three months of the year 1728 were again spent at Oxford, where he took priest's orders on the 22nd September. We have no details concerning those two years of rural ministry. All we know is that the young curate fulfilled his duties with the most scrupulous assiduity. As to the spiritual results of his work, he himself declared there had been none. His preaching must have suffered from the vagueness of his religious ideas, and could not as yet take as a foundation that personal experience of salvation which, at a later period, constituted its power. But notwithstanding the absence of encouraging successes, John Wesley might have settled for life in that out-of-the-way parish, if Divine Providence, intending something else for him, had not summoned him back to Oxford, where in the meanwhile a remarkable religious movement had begun. His Fellowship in connection with Lincoln College, as well as the temporal advantages accruing therefrom, made it his duty to remain at the disposal of that college whenever it might require his assistance. The rector of Lincoln College, Dr. Morley, having sent for him, neither Wesley nor his father dared to oppose the wishes of a man who had rendered them great services. "I can refuse Dr. Morley nothing," was the father's decision; so Wesley returned to Oxford in November 1729, to spend there six years more.

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. viii. p. 111.

The facts related in this chapter, and the letters we have quoted, might give a wrong impression concerning John Wesley, if we did not qualify them by adding that this young man of twenty-four, who thought so gravely on the problems of religious life, remained all along amiable and cheerful. His letters to his family were not only affectionate, but often full of mirth, especially when writing to his sisters. He requested that they would answer him, and playfully declared that, although rather poor, he could yet afford now and then to pay for postage.

One of his sisters, Hetty, had a remarkable gift for poetry, and had composed a poem called "The Dog," a copy of which was impatiently claimed by John Wesley. The eldest, Emilia, entertained a most tender affection for him, and, although she was much older, called him her "most intimate companion; her counsellor in difficulties," adding that "her heart lay open to him at all times."[1] There is extant a letter she wrote to him, in which she seems to remember she is his eldest sister, and advises him to regulate his expenses by his income, and reminds him of the straitened circumstances of his family.[2]

Wesley's sisters were all gifted women. The eldest, Emilia, lived to eighty, and was always in close sympathy with the work of her brothers John and Charles. Susannah (Sukey), who was pretty, lively, and witty, was badly married, and it embittered, perhaps shortened, her life. Mary, who was slightly deformed, was perhaps the happiest of the sisters. Gentle and amiable, she was married to her father's curate, Whitelamb, and died a year after her marriage. The most gifted among Wesley's sisters, but perhaps the most unhappy, was Hetty, whose real name was Mehetabel;

[1] Dr. Rigg, *The Living Wesley*, p. 44. [2] Tyerman, vol. i. p. 33.

at eight years old she could read the Greek New Testament, and she became a precious help to her father in his studies. In a wild fit of obstinacy she married a man named White, who had neither education nor morals, and she endured martyrdom through twenty years of that ill-matched union; her only solace was writing poems, full at once of harmony and of feeling. She died in 1750. Anne, one of the least known among the sisters, does not appear to have done much better in the marriage line. Martha was so like her brother John that Dr. Clarke, who knew both very well, said that, had they worn the same clothes, they might have been mistaken one for the other. She had a very bright intellect, and was well acquainted with the current literary and theological questions. The famous Dr. Samuel Johnson was very fond of conversing with her. She was married to a clergyman named Hall, whose heart was as fickle as his mind was ill-balanced, and who at last forsook her, after inflicting upon her all kinds of suffering. She reached extreme old age, since she died in 1791 in her eighty-fifth year. Keziah, the youngest sister, died in 1740, when only thirty-one years old, and was remembered for a deeply serious turn of mind and a kind, loving heart.

John Wesley had a brother named Samuel, his elder by thirteen years, who, after taking orders, devoted himself to scholastic pursuits, and distinguished himself in that career. He also had a considerable amount of that poetical faculty which seems to have been an heirloom in the family. His tasks and associations identified him at last with the High Church party, and he was for his two brothers a censor rather than an ally. John had been taught by him the elements of Hebrew, and kept up a regular correspondence with him, considering him at that time in the light of a mentor. Samuel Wesley,

junior, was intimate with several of the writers of his day—Pope, Addison, Swift, and Prior. He was one of the founders of the first hospital opened in Westminster. After remaining twenty years in Westminster School, he was made the headmaster of Tiverton Grammar School, where he died, forty-eight years old, in 1739, consequently in the very year which saw Methodism definitely established as a distinct religious body.

Letters published a few years ago have revealed an idyll of the early life of John Wesley. In a visit he paid to the home of one of his comrades, Robert Kirkham, whose father was a clergyman at Stanton, Gloucestershire, he made the acquaintance of one of his friend's sisters, Betty, for whom he soon entertained a very great affection. But that friendship did not ripen into matrimony, perhaps because the young lady's parents opposed it, or else because she herself became indifferent to the young minister, towards whom she at first seemed inclined.

Having been disappointed on that side, Wesley may have hoped that he had met with a blessed compensation prepared for him by Divine Providence. His friends Kirkham had introduced him to the Granvilles, who lived in the same neighbourhood. He soon became a great admirer of a distinguished member of that circle. Mary Granville was an intelligent and beautiful young widow. Her social advantages had already connected her with the best society, and her second marriage, when she became Mrs. Delany, was to introduce her at the Court of George III., where she shone with a bright lustre. The young Oxford theologian pleased her fancy, and a regular correspondence was established between them. They assumed the fictitious surnames of Cyrus and Aspasia, and for several years exchanged their views upon all sorts of subjects: literature, theology, even

casuistry, using a style which, on the side of John Wesley at least, seems affected and "euphuistic." "That series of letters," says Dr. Rigg, "reveal Wesley in a light altogether new, which show the workings of his mind, and even his style of writing, as no one could ever have expected to see them, utterly contradicting the idea that he was wanting in the softer and warmer emotions of our nature."[1] But neither Betty Kirkham nor Mary Granville[2] was destined by providence to become the wife of that man who, like Saint Paul, whose work he was destined to emulate, had to forego the joys of a Christian home, for which he seemed so eminently fitted by his tenderness of heart.

[1] Rigg, *The Living Wesley*, p. 55.

[2] The life and letters of Mrs. Delany were published by Lady Llanover in 1821. It is a very curious repertory of information concerning her times. As to her correspondence with Wesley, it was printed, in part at least, by the *Wesleyan Times* in 1866. It has been analysed and commented upon in Dr. Rigg's *Living Wesley*, first part, third chapter.

CHAPTER III

METHODISM AT OXFORD

(1729–1735)

JOHN WESLEY had a younger brother called Charles, whose life, at the time we are now describing, became closely connected with that of his brother. Charles was born on 18th November 1708, and was consequently five years younger than John. In 1716 he entered Westminster School, where his brother Samuel was a teacher. While he was there an event occurred which might have completely altered the course of his life. An Irish gentleman, Garrett Wesley (or Wellesley) by name, who had no heirs, offered the Epworth rector to adopt Charles as his son, provided that young man came over to Ireland to live with him. But Charles refused to go, and his father did not feel warranted in forcing upon him an offer that would have introduced him to a noble family. Soon after this same Irish gentleman adopted a relative named Richard Colley, who inherited his name and fortune. In 1747 Richard Colley became Earl of Mornington: his grandsons were Richard, Viscount Wellesley, and Arthur, Duke of Wellington. Thus a connection exists between Charles Wesley declining a fortune when he was but a child, and Wellington's exalted state and European influence.

In 1726, whilst John Wesley was beginning his

ministerial life in his father's parish, Charles in his turn entered the Oxford University, where he became a Fellow of Christ Church College. At first he was neither very studious nor very serious. His brother John having remonstrated with him on account of his levity, he answered, "What, would you have me to be a saint all at once?" But, after a while, his feelings underwent a great change. He formed religious habits, communicated every week, and dropped his former comrades in order to associate with a few serious young men.

When John Wesley returned to Oxford he united with Charles and his new friends, and, as he was their elder and more advanced than they were, he became the head of the little society. This included at first, besides the two brothers, only two other young men, Robert Kirkham and William Morgan. But gradually fresh members were added to that small nucleus, some of them being professors of the colleges, others simply students. Several afterwards became distinguished, such as James Hervey, who had a name as a religious writer; Benjamin Ingham, the Yorkshire evangelist; John Gambold, the Moravian bishop; and, above all others, George Whitefield, who became the most powerful preacher of his time, but had entered the university as a "poor student," and was the last admitted into the association. Some others died young, as was the case with Morgan, in whom ascetic austerity was united with apostolic zeal, and Charles Kinchin, a lovely and gentle character. Others did not, in following years, fulfil the hopes entertained of them from their beginnings.

These young men, never more than fifteen in number, instituted among themselves an association for the cultivation of piety and of study. They met every evening to talk over their work and their studies; the

evening began by prayer and ended in a frugal supper. These meetings of serious students were a novelty in Oxford, where at that time piety was at a discount, and dissipation flourished along with scepticism. Accordingly, they were nicknamed "The Holy Club," and the members individually "Methodists," this last title on account of their regular and methodical attendance to religious duties. Although the name "Methodists" was not altogether novel in the religious world, it had now opened on a brilliant career. At first disclaimed and afterwards accepted by the people to whom it had been applied in the spirit of mockery, it has fared like many a plebeian name which has won illustrious fame upon the battlefield.

John Wesley was the very soul of that brotherly association, and fully deserved the title of "Trustee of the Holy Club," which was bestowed upon him by the facetious students of the university. His intellectual superiority, his precocious maturity, and the gift for organisation he already possessed in a remarkable degree, contributed to assign him a preponderating influence amongst his friends. But he did not abuse his authority, or rather his influence over them, and although his advice was generally followed, it was only after they had thoroughly considered it. Thus it was that the young Methodists of Oxford, with all the deficiencies that existed in their religious views, devoted their time so largely to good works, to the visiting of poor families, holding services in prisons, helping in elementary schools, and spending in alms all they could save of their small means.

In that respect also John Wesley gave a good example. His liberalities knew no limits but those of his resources, all kind of luxury was looked upon by him as so robbed from the poor. He confined his personal

expenses to strict necessaries, and they never exceeded £28. When his income successively rose from £30 to £60, and then to £90, and finally to £120, he made it a rule not to alter the simplicity of his manner of life, and to employ for the relief of the poor everything beyond the £28 he had found sufficient for his private wants.

He was quite as conscientious in his use of time as in his use of money. Having noticed that he awoke regularly in the course of the night, he concluded that he remained in bed longer than nature required, and, after a series of experiments or observations made upon himself, he found out that the only way to have uninterrupted sleep was to get up at four in the morning. After practising that rule for sixty years, he wrote thus in his *Journal*: "I rose at four (as, by the grace of God, I have done ever since), and I lay awake no more. And I do not now lie awake (taking the year round) a quarter of an hour together in a month."[1] From that time the first hour in the day was set apart for prayer and reading the Bible, "The Book," in Wesley's estimation. The task for every day was methodically ordered in advance, and the employment of every hour was registered down in a special notebook.

This is what Wesley wrote to one of his pupils in August 1731: "You who have not the assurance of a day to live, are not wise if you waste a moment. The shortest way to knowledge seems to be this: 1. To ascertain what knowledge you desire to attain. 2. To read no book which does not in some way tend to the attainment of that knowledge. 3. To read no book which does tend to the attainment of it, unless it be the best in its kind. 4. To finish one before you begin another. 5. To read them all in such order, that

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. vii. p. 69.

every subsequent book may illustrate and confirm the preceding."[1]

So faithful a use of time was one of the principal features in the discipline of life to which these young men submitted. They were quite as precise in following the various practices enjoined by the Established Church, and even revived some which had become obsolete. They not only partook of the Sacrament every week, but they observed carefully all canonical fasts, and touched no food whatever until three in the afternoon on the Wednesday and Friday of every week.

Such ascetic and ritualistic tendencies would naturally become more and more pronounced with young men who neither had a perfect knowledge of the gospel teachings nor enjoyed a proper and judicious guidance. John Wesley's correspondence with his mother shows how far he was carried down that peculiar slope at that time. Once he discusses the knotty problem of our Lord's presence in the Eucharist, which he designated as "the Christian sacrifice"; at another time he consults her as to the propriety of giving up all pursuits not directly leading him to the end he had in view, such as, for instance, the study of languages and of philosophy. Other questions, too, were mooted in that circle of young students who were thirsting after perfection, but trying to find it in ways more or less perilous. Confession, the mixing of water with the wine in the Lord's Supper, and other questions of the same kind, seem to have troubled them.[2] In that path of church

[1] *Methodist Magazine*, 1850, p. 1064.

[2] Emily, the elder sister of the Wesleys, did not sympathise with the ritualistic leanings of her brothers. This is what she wrote to John: "To lay open the state of my soul to you, or any of our clergy, is what I have no inclination to at present, and I believe I never shall. I shall not put my conscience under the direction of mortal man, frail as myself. To my own Master I stand or fall. Nay, I scruple not to say that all

ordinances where they groped as in the darkness of night, the difficult thing was to stop, and there was a positive danger that the Oxford revival should terminate in a mere ritualistic movement, like that which has taken place in our days at the same university.

Ritualism, however, was not the only danger that threatened Methodism in its cradle. It might be feared also lest it should wreck its destinies upon the shoal of Mysticism. As we have seen, Wesley had derived some good from the reading of William Law's books. In July 1732, happening to be in London, he went to see the man whose religious writings had been a means of grace to him. A friendship between them began which lasted several years. Law was at that time studying some mystical writers, and he advised John Wesley to peruse *Theologia Germanica* and the works of Tauler. They had several interviews, and John Wesley was recommended by his new friend to practise "mental prayer and the like exercises, as the most effectual means of purifying the soul and uniting it with God."[1] He accordingly set himself to read the works of German mystics, and soon completed the course by going through those of the French school, such as Madame Guyon and Antoinette Bourignon. He might have gone still further, along with his guide, who more and more drifted towards the foggy speculations of the theosophist Boehme; happily, he was gifted with a good deal of practical common sense, and that arrested him on the

such desire in you, or any other ecclesiastic, seems to me like church tyranny, and assuming to yourselves a dominion over your fellow-creatures which was never designed you by God. . . . I further own that I do not own frequent communion necessary to salvation, nor a means of Christian perfection. But do not mistake my meaning; I only think communing every Sunday, or very frequently, lessens our veneration for that sacred ordinance, and consequently our profiting by it."

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. iii. p. 72.

downward slope. "I think," he says later, in a letter to his brother Samuel, under date 23rd November 1736,—"I think the rock on which I had the nearest made shipwreck of the faith was the writings of the mystics."[1] "Their noble descriptions of union with God and internal religion made everything else appear mean, flat, and insipid. But, in truth, they make good works appear so too."[2]

This partiality for Mysticism had at least one good result in Wesley's case, since it put a stop temporarily to his excessive fondness for tradition, which had gradually led him to place it on a level with Holy Scripture, and to make a great deal of rites and forms. But it is still more worthy of remark, that neither Mysticism nor Ritualism had the effect of turning him away from practical activity, which was the instinctive want of his moral nature. In that respect Oxford Methodism clearly foreshadowed the Methodism of future years. In Wesley, and in his friends, Christian activity was a fruit of their noble desire to save souls. No doubt their piety savoured a little of the cloister, but the evangelical element predominated in their zeal. When the old Epworth rector was consulted by his son as to the propriety of going on with the various works of evangelisation he had established for the poor and ignorant, he approved most heartily. "As to your own designs and employments, what can I say of them than *Valdè probo*: and that I have the highest reason to bless God that He has given me two sons together at Oxford, to whom He has given grace and courage to turn the war against the world and the devil."[3]

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xii. p. 27.

[2] See Dr. Rigg's *Living Wesley*, pp. 85 and 112; or Southey's *Life of Wesley*, vol. i. p. 94.

[3] Tyerman, *Life and Times of Samuel Wesley*, p. 406.

It was war indeed that threatened these young disciples, whose only guilt consisted in an attempt to restore the doctrines and discipline of the Church of England to an honourable place in that university which should have been their bulwark, but where, in reality, they were neglected or forsaken. At first the new movement was met by disdain on one side and mockeries on the other. But in 1731 the senior graduates held a meeting with the avowed purpose of checking the progress of the Methodistic revival. The public press, which was already a mighty power in England, interfered also in the following year. *Fogg's Weekly Journal* thus violently assaulted John Wesley and his friends: "These Methodists pretend to great refinements, as well as to what regards the speculative as the practical part of religion; and have a very near affinity to the Essenes among the Jews and the Pietists in Switzerland. . . . These sons of sorrow designed to make the whole place a monastery."[1] These attacks were met in a very clever way, in the shape of a letter written by a gentleman of the neighbourhood of Oxford to a friend in London. These were the first fruits of the lengthy polemics which lay in store for Methodism.

John Wesley himself took no part in the discussion, although he had already begun to resort to printing, which was to become one of his most powerful agencies. In 1733 he issued, for the use of his pupils, his first production, *A Collection of Forms of Prayer for every Day in the Week*. The second of Wesley's publications, issued in 1735, was *The Christian's Pattern; or a Treatise of the Imitation of Christ, by Thomas à Kempis*, of which he, at the same time, published two editions. His first book breathes a true and simple piety. In 1735 he also printed a sermon.

[1] Tyerman, *Life of Wesley*, p. 85.

In two of the sermons he preached at Oxford in 1733, but which were not printed until a later period, Wesley unfolded, in a manner already sufficiently clear, the doctrines of Christian perfection and of the Spirit's work within the human soul. We must acknowledge, however, that these manifestations were but like sparks flying across his mind, compared with the brilliant light which was to illuminate him so fully after bringing a new life into his heart. In the meanwhile he earnestly tried to be humble, holy, and devoted, but did not succeed, either because he entertained only vague and contradictory ideas of the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost, or rather because he had not yet experienced it himself.

Thus was John Wesley the connecting and vital link between the members of the little Oxford religious community: his personal zeal kept up that of others and increased their numbers. If he was away a few months, they were soon scattered. In the interval of one of his journeys to Epworth, the number of the young men who partook of the Lord's Supper weekly in St. Mary's Church fell from twenty-seven to five.

As late as 1735, six years after the association had begun, it was reinforced by the addition of a member whose name was to occupy a prominent place in the future revival. George Whitefield was born 16th December 1714, at Gloucester, in the most humble condition of life. His father kept an inn, and died when he was yet a mere child. His mother, on account of his evident taste for study, determined to strain her means to the utmost on his behalf, and succeeded in getting him admitted to Pembroke College, Oxford, as a "poor student," a position which obliged him to wait on his rich comrades in order to maintain himself there. The reading of the *Imitation* and of some other mystical

books had much to do with the development of his piety, and established a sympathy between him and the Methodists. His heart seemed to fly towards them as he saw the little band going through a crowd of scoffers to communicate in St. Mary's. But for a long time his timidity stood in the way, and it was only three years after arriving in Oxford that he joined them. He soon kept in step with them and adopted their rules, sometimes exceeding them in the rigidity of his self-discipline. He practised the longest fast and the most severe penance, even so far as to endanger his health. He was the first among them to attain spiritual freedom, the Wesley brothers reaching that point only three years later.

John Wesley was not moved by the contempt which was poured upon him by the leaders of the university, who generally considered him as an enthusiast. Leaning on his brother Charles, a staunch and valiant heart, and on a few friends who had remained faithful, he determined to hold fast. He could face mockery with perfect composure, and he was quite impervious to the fear of man. His residing in Oxford did not prevent him from undertaking frequent journeys in various parts of England, either on foot or on horseback. In the year 1734 he thus travelled over more than eight hundred miles, preaching regularly every Sunday, as though he had already begun his future career as a missionary. So much bodily and mental activity, added to fasting and other privations to which he continued to subject himself, seriously injured his health. In spite of his great constitutional strength, he fell into a state of extreme weakness, and began to expectorate blood. One night he broke a blood-vessel, and thought his last hour had come. "Lord," said he, "prepare me for Thy coming, and then come when Thou wilt!" But the vigour

of his constitution enabled him to rally, and he recovered his health, thanks to the care of an able physician. He immediately resumed his work with a deepened conviction of the shortness of life.

Wesley was under the impression that perhaps he was specially called to remain in Oxford, in order to continue working for the revival of piety among students, the future ministers of the Church. It was owing to that impression, which seemed to grow more and more upon him, that he declined succeeding his father, who was incapacitated by old age and infirmities. His family, however, insisted so much that at last he offered himself; but it was in vain, for the Prime Minister, Robert Walpole, who had the right of nomination, and who was prejudiced against Wesley, appointed another candidate.[1]

The Epworth rector died whilst they were corresponding over those arrangements, which failed, no doubt, because God intended other things for His young servant. The end of the old ecclesiastical champion was peace. He had the comfort in his last days to find himself sustained by the presence of his sons John and Charles.

He said to his son John: "The inward witness, son,—the inward witness, that is the proof, the strongest proof of Christianity."

"Sir, are you in much pain?" inquired his son.

"God does chasten me with pain," he answered; "yea, all my bones with strong pain; but I thank Him for all, I bless Him for all, I love Him for all."

To his daughter Emily he said: "Do not be concerned at my death; God will then begin to manifest Himself to my family."

[1] This last fact was not known to Wesley's early biographers, and has been brought to light by Tyerman in his *Life and Times of John Wesley*, vol. i. p. 102.

He often laid his hand upon Charles's head and said: "Be steady. The Christian faith will surely revive in this kingdom; you shall see it, though I shall not."

As the end was approaching, and John commended his father's soul to God, "You have done all," said the dying man, and he fell asleep, without a struggle, or sigh, or groan, on 25th April 1735.[1]

We have hitherto seen Methodism in its cradle. Its infancy was hard and austere. The university, instead of acting as a tender mother, was towards it like a mercenary and heartless nurse. Of course, early Methodism was very different from what it became in after years, it was both mystical and ritualistic; it seemed more likely to give rise to "an ascetic brotherhood than to a powerful missionary society." But one common feature will be found in both stages of the movement, and that is the spiritual principle which actuated these young men when, under a strong conviction of sin, they were led to such austere practices; and which, at a later period, inspired these earnest gospel workers in their mighty and successful appeals to conscience. In order, however, that this thirst after holiness should issue in something better than a new and useless form of Catholicism, it was absolutely necessary for the Oxford Methodists to make, as it were, a fresh discovery of the great truth that gave rise to the Reformation, namely, justification by faith, a vital principle which had been almost given up by the Church of England.

[1] Tyerman, *Life and Times of Samuel Wesley*, p. 414.

CHAPTER IV

MISSION TO AMERICA

(1735–1737)

On the 9th of June 1732 King George II. had granted the charter for establishing a new colony in America, which, in honour of his name, was called Georgia. It was situated between South Carolina and Florida, and its founder was Oglethorpe, a philanthropist who had been formerly a staff officer in the army of Prince Eugene. This good man, feeling a deep sympathy for those numerous individuals who, as insolvent debtors, filled the jails of the kingdom, obtained from Parliament permission for them to go and settle in the new colony, himself being appointed as governor. The first batch of emigrants started about the end of 1732, under the command of Oglethorpe himself, and with a clergyman as their chaplain. Soon other settlers were attracted to the same point. German Protestants, who had been persecuted by the Archbishop of Salzburg, took refuge there, and they were followed by a band of Moravians and another of Scotch Presbyterians.

This young colony required ministers of the gospel who would devote themselves to the evangelisation not only of the colonists, but also of the Indians and the black slaves. Such was the express wish of Oglethorpe,

who, having heard about John Wesley, asked him to undertake this missionary work. Wesley looked upon the proposal as something quite providential, and gave his consent, on condition that his mother gave hers. The latter, always ready for the loftiest self-sacrifice, exclaimed: "If I had twenty sons, I should rejoice that they were all so employed, though I should never see them more."

On the eve of embarking, John Wesley thus explained to one of his friends the motives which impelled him to go to Georgia: "My chief motive . . . is the hope of saving my own soul. I hope to learn the true sense of the gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathen. They have no comments to construe away the text; no vain philosophy to corrupt it; no luxurious, sensual, covetous, ambitious expounders to soften its unpleasing truths. . . . They have no party, no interest to serve, and are therefore fit to receive the gospel in its simplicity. They are as little children, humble, willing to learn, and eager to do the will of God. . . . A right faith will, I trust, by the mercy of God, open the way for a right practice; especially when most of those temptations are removed which here so easily beset me. . . . It will be no small thing to be able, without fear of giving offence, to live on water and the fruits of the earth. . . . An Indian hut affords no food for curiosity, no gratification of the desire of grand, or new, or pretty things. . . . I hope, from the moment I leave the English shore under the acknowledged character of a teacher sent from God, there shall be no word heard from my lips but what properly flows from that character. . . . It is not for me, who have been a grievous sinner from my youth up, and am yet laden with foolish and hurtful desires, to expect God should work so great things by my hands; but I am assured, if I be once converted myself, He will

then employ me both to strengthen my brethren and to preach His name to the Gentiles." [1]

From this letter we can judge that, even if John Wesley entertained some delusive ideas concerning the heathen, he did not do so concerning himself. He felt the need of a more living piety, but hitherto was mistaken as to the means of reaching that end.

It was on the 14th of October 1735 that the two Wesleys embarked for America at Gravesend, having with them two worthy auxiliaries. One of them, Benjamin Ingham, twenty-three years old, was one of the Methodist students of Oxford. John Wesley, who knew how devoted he was, wrote to him: "Fast and pray; and then send me word whether you dare go with me to the Indians." Ingham followed his friend's advice, and then, without even taking time to consult his parents, came down straight to embark with him. This journey greatly influenced the course of his life, since he was thereby made acquainted with the Moravians, who at a later period employed him as an evangelist in Yorkshire, where his ministry was very successful.

The other young man who accompanied the Wesleys to Georgia was called Charles Delamotte, a name which suggests that he must have been of French extraction. He was only twenty-one. His father was a magistrate in Middlesex. Such was the affection he entertained for John Wesley, that he volunteered to accompany him to America in the capacity of a servant. He entered into the work with great zeal, and, when he came back to England, associated also, like Ingham, with the Moravian Brethren.

Of the Moravians, who were about to exercise such a blessed influence over those young men, there were twenty-six in the ship. They were on their way to

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xii. pp. 38–40.

Georgia, where they would meet other friends who had gone before, in hope of finding there a land where they might serve God without hindrance. One of their bishops, David Nitschmann, was in the company. He was a pleasant and serious old man of sixty or thereabout. At once John Wesley and his friends sought and obtained intercourse with those sincere Christians, in whom they found a type of piety far superior to all they had known hitherto.

Scarcely were they settled on the vessel when Wesley and his three companions took measures for a careful distribution of their time. "Believing," he writes in his *Journal*, "the denying ourselves, even in the smallest instances, might, by the blessing of God, be helpful to us, we wholly left off the use of flesh and wine, and confined ourselves to vegetable food, chiefly rice and biscuit."[1] A few days later he adds: "Finding nature did not require so frequent supplies as we had been accustomed to, we agreed to leave off suppers."[2] One night, having been obliged to sleep on the floor, in consequence of the storm having drenched his bed, Wesley found that there was nothing in this which a man in health could not easily support, and concluded that in future he should "not find it needful to go to bed (as it is called) any more."[3]

Rising before four in the morning, they devoted an hour to private prayer. From five to seven they studied the Bible together, carefully comparing it with the writings of the Christian Fathers. At eight, after a frugal breakfast, they conducted public worship, to which all the passengers were invited. From nine to twelve Wesley learned German, his brother wrote sermons, Delamotte studied Greek, and Ingham instructed the children. At twelve they conversed freely about their

[1] Vol. i. p. 17. [2] P. 19. [3] P. 22.

feelings and their occupations. The afternoon was spent in humble efforts to do good among the passengers, with whom the young missionaries conversed or read devotional works. Prayers were read again at four o'clock. The evening was occupied also in reading and conversation; and when, after a day so well filled, they retired to their hard-earned repose, "neither the roaring of the sea, nor the motion of the ship, could take away the refreshing sleep which God gave them."[1]

The voyage was long and painful; on several occasions storms threatened to engulf the vessel that bore them. In these hours of danger the panic was general; Wesley himself was not free from fear; he trembled at the approach of death, and was ashamed to find his faith insufficient to support him in the hour of need. The calm and tranquil attitude of the Moravians contrasted remarkably with that of the other passengers, and excited his astonishment. From the moment of their embarkation he had marked their deep piety; he had always seen them humble, willing to perform the most humiliating services for the other passengers, and ready to endure patiently all kinds of insult. But their attitude in the prospect of immediate death was what surprised him most. One day a sudden storm arose just as the Germans had begun their service; the waves broke over the vessel with great violence, sweeping clean over the decks and tearing the mainsail in pieces. Many shrieked with fright. The Moravians alone appeared unmoved, and continued their singing. Wesley afterwards asked one of them, "Were you not afraid?" He replied, "I thank God, no." "But were not your women and children?" "No; our women and children are not afraid to die."[2] Wesley felt that this was a point he had not yet attained.

[1] P. 18. [2] P. 22.

On the 6th of February 1736, about eight in the morning, they first set foot on American ground. Like Christopher Columbus, on his first landing on the shores of the New World, Wesley fell on his knees. But it may well be said, that just as the great explorer of the fifteenth century was almost unconscious of the magnitude of his discovery, so was the great missionary of the eighteenth little aware of the extensive work which his followers were to accomplish on the continent which now lay before them.

Savannah, the chief place in the new colony, hardly numbered at that time forty houses, and they were all built on the same pattern. There were only six more towns founded as yet in Georgia. Except the fields cultivated in the immediate neighbourhood of these few places, the whole country consisted of forests and of grassy plains inhabited by the Indians. Such was the land where John Wesley lived from the 5th of November 1736 to the 2nd of December 1737.

The day after his arrival he made the acquaintance of a Moravian pastor called Spangenberg. Full of confidence in all that bore the sanction of a community he had already learned to reverence, he asked for advice respecting the work in which he was about to engage. "My brother," said the Moravian, "I must first ask you one or two questions.—Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?" More accustomed to teach than to be taught, John Wesley was surprised at these plain questions, and "knew not what to answer." Perceiving his embarrassment, his new friend continued, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" Wesley replied, "I know He is the Saviour of the world." "True," said he, "but do you know He has saved you?" "I hope He has died to save me."

Spangenberg added one more question, "Do you know yourself?" Wesley hesitatingly answered, "I do"; but he adds, "I fear they were vain words." The Moravian pastor then related his personal experience and conversion. The recital made a deep impression on the young missionary, and convinced him still more clearly that there was something wanting in himself.[1]

These impressions were further deepened by his continuous intercourse with these good Germans. Lodging with Delamotte under their roof, he could not but admire their purity of life. "They were," says he, "always employed, always cheerful themselves, and in good humour with one another; they had put away all anger, and strife, and wrath, and bitterness, and clamour, and evil-speaking; they walked worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called, and adorned the gospel of our Lord in all things."[2]

His deeply rooted ecclesiastical prejudices insensibly wore away in communion with these simple and sincere Christians. He was present one day at one of their church meetings when, after several hours spent in conference and prayer, they proceeded to the election and ordination of a bishop. The Fellow of Oxford was struck with the plainness and solemnity of this service, contrasting so strongly with the ceremonial adopted on such an occasion by the Anglican Church. "The great simplicity, as well as solemnity, of the whole," he says, "almost made me forget the seventeen hundred years between, and imagine myself in one of those assemblies where form and state were not, but Paul the tent-maker, or Peter the fisherman, presided, yet with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power."[3]

John Wesley had intended to devote special attention to the evangelisation of the Indians. He was anxious,

[1] P. 23. [2] P. 26. [3] P. 26.

therefore, to gain access to them immediately, but numerous obstacles lay in the way of his designs. He learned by experience that the neighbourhood of a civilised community was in itself a formidable hindrance to the conversion of the pagans. On the other hand, he was not his own master, and the governor of the colony did not wish him to absent himself from the European settlement in order to follow the Indians to their rude encampments. He strove, however, to benefit them as far as it was in his power, hoping that circumstances would one day permit him to devote his whole strength to such work. For the present the settlers demanded assiduous pastoral attention, and the missionaries therefore felt bound to begin with them.

John Wesley's *Journal* shows with what ardour he threw himself into this work. At Savannah, as at Oxford, it was "the little ones" who claimed his most earnest efforts: the poor, the sick, and the young were the objects of his special care. He was also deeply interested in the slaves, who were, even at that time, numerous in America, and he strove to improve their condition. The remarkable gift for languages which he possessed was useful to him amid the crowd of emigrants brought thither from all quarters of the globe. His recent studies in German enabled him to address a few familiar discourses to some poor emigrants, who would otherwise have been cut off from all the means of grace. At the urgent request of some French settlers at Savannah, he conducted religious services in their language. Several Vaudois from Piedmont asked him to give them an Italian service, which he also consented to try. Lastly, as a further proof of his abilities as a linguist and zeal as a missionary, he began to study Spanish, in order that he might converse with his "Jewish parishioners, some of whom," said he,

"seem nearer the mind that was in Christ than many of those who call Him Lord."[1]

As at Oxford, Wesley endeavoured to gather the few pious persons he met into little societies, which assembled once or twice a week in order that the members might examine themselves, and exhort and instruct one another. It is evident that these small gatherings, which afterwards played so important a part in the organisation which Wesley founded, were created simply to answer the requirements of his missionary work.

Besides the influence the missionary exerted on the little circle which he thus gathered round him, he wielded a wider, though less deep, influence on a large portion of the population of the colony. The purity of his character did more than even his talents to gain for him their confidence and admiration. Multitudes flocked to his preaching, which had a powerful effect. One day he complained from the pulpit of the inconsistency of coming to church in a costume more becoming some worldly festival. From that day his hearers gave him no occasion to find fault with them, but appeared at public worship in more modest attire. One evening one of the principal families in the town had determined to give a ball at the same hour as Wesley was holding his service; the result was awaited with some anxiety, but the reputation of the pastor triumphed over the attractions of the ball: the latter was deserted, while the church was full.

Religious services were very numerous. On Sundays, there was one at five in the morning and others at twelve and at three in the afternoon; in the evening, Wesley met in his house those who wished to end the day with some exercises of devotion. On Wednesday night, there was a full service, but on other evenings it was shorter. There was a real exaggeration in the

[1] P. 47.

number of these services, and this was soon turned into a grievance against the minister by the colonists.

A great amount of care was bestowed by the young missionaries on the instruction of children. Delamotte, at Savannah, was at the head of a school with thirty to forty pupils, who received from Wesley religious instruction twice a week. Several scholars evinced serious dispositions, and were admitted to the Lord's Supper. Along with his spoken teachings, Wesley occasionally gave the children other lessons which partook sometimes of a rather eccentric character. For instance, having heard that some who had shoes despised those who had none, he one day came to the school barefoot, which had naturally the effect of astonishing the children, but which effectually cured them, it is said, of their silly pride. Although such conduct did not expose him to any danger in point of health, considering the climate of Georgia, no doubt it might appear improper in the eyes of his parishioners; but he was far above being influenced by unfavourable judgments.

Far worse than these exuberant displays of zeal, which at times seemed intended to provoke public opinion, were his extreme ritualism and rigidity. Wishful to revive the ancient customs of the Church, he refused, for instance, to baptize otherwise than by immersion. He refused also to recognise the validity of baptism performed by any minister who had not received episcopal ordination, and even went so far as to repel from the Lord's Table persons whose baptism was, in his judgment, "invalid."[1] He used to insist on con-

[1] Such was the case with Bolzius, the minister of the Salzburg Protestants who had settled at Savannah. John Wesley refused to admit that worthy Christian to the Lord's Supper, because he had not been baptized in a canonical way, according to Wesley. At a later period he condemned severely his own conduct, and said, "Have I not been finely beaten with my own staff?"

fession and penance as being Christian duties, and he followed the ancient custom of mixing water with the wine in the Holy Sacrament. In short, Wesley was at that time, namely, a whole century before Newman and Pusey, bent on transforming the Church of England on the plan followed by ritualists in our days.

These were novelties in the colony, and they scandalised many, especially Presbyterians and other Nonconformists, who had not a mind to accept in Georgia things which their fathers had strenuously fought against in England. Even the Church people were not generally favourable to such a revival of past usages. The result was that, before many months had elapsed, the popularity which had greeted the young missionaries on their arrival had given place to bitter opposition. Some people pretended they were Roman Catholics in disguise. Imprudent words and a certain stiffness in their intercourse with the settlers made matters still worse. Charles Wesley, who had become the minister at Frederica, was the first to give way to discouragement and to re-embark for England. He was followed by Benjamin Ingham, who had become convinced of the impossibility of attempting to evangelise the Indians. As to John Wesley, he steadfastly sustained the violence of the storm for a little while longer; but at last he also had to leave the colony, owing to circumstances we must briefly state.

A young lady, named Miss Hopkey, the niece of the chief magistrate in Savannah, had by her personal qualities attracted the attention of John Wesley, and he intended to make her an offer. But when things seemed almost decided, suddenly everything was stopped. It is difficult to determine on which side the estrangement began. Must we believe, according to one of Wesley's

biographers,[1] that he took the advice of the Moravians, and persuaded himself she was not a suitable companion for him? Was it, on the contrary, as others say,[2] that she herself spontaneously gave up the idea of uniting her life with that of such an austere man? We know not, and suspect there was on either side a move in the same direction. But Miss Hopkey found comfort in marrying, a few days after, a gentleman named Williamson, whilst John Wesley grieved for a long time on account of his disappointment. This is what he wrote at the time: "On that day (4th March 1737) God commanded me to pull out my right eye; and, by His grace, I determined to do so: but, being slack in the execution, on Saturday, 12th March, God being very merciful to me, my friend performed what I could not."[3] Forty-nine years later he remembered this passage of his life, and made the following entry in a letter: "I remember formerly, when I read these words in the church at Savannah, 'Son of man, behold, I take from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke,' I was pierced through as with a sword, and could not utter a word more. But our comfort is, He that made the heart can heal the heart."[4]

This affair, through which John Wesley had behaved very honourably, although perhaps not with the utmost prudence, brought on him considerable annoyance. It made enemies of two men who were in a position to injure him: one of them was Causton, the magistrate, and the uncle of the young lady; the other was Williamson, the suitor who was accepted by her. It must be added,

[1] Moore, *Life of Wesley*, vol. i. p. 312.

[2] Whitehead and Southey, who wrote, each of them, a *Life of Wesley*.

[3] This passage is in the unpublished portion of Wesley's *Journal*, and has been brought to light by Tyerman (*Life of Wesley*, vol. i. p. 148).

[4] Wesley's *Correspondence*, Letter DCCCLXV.

that neither of these men seems to have been worthy of esteem. In their train followed at once all those who had been offended by Wesley's ecclesiastic rigidity and burning zeal. Soon they commenced a lawsuit against him for libel, and claimed a thousand pounds for damages, on the ground of his having injured Mrs. Williamson's reputation by excluding her from the Sacrament table. John Wesley could not but acknowledge the fact, but declared that his refusal to admit her was solely due to her having refused to conform to the disciplinary laws of the Church. Besides, he denied that a civil tribunal had any competence in such a case. The judges, however, drew a formal indictment against him, in which his having introduced several novelties into the Church discipline and ritual was denounced as intolerable. But their proceedings did not go beyond that point, and they postponed the case *sine die*.

Wesley, seeing how much excitement there was in the public mind, and wisely perceiving that henceforth there was no chance of success for his work in Georgia, decided to return to England. And he had to leave, almost as a fugitive, the country in which less than two years before he had been received with enthusiasm.

Thus ended in a most humbling defeat the missionary journey which had such an auspicious beginning. After proving, in his own experience, his inability through ceremonies and sacraments to procure peace, he had now found out, among the settlers of Georgia, that the evangelical ministry could not but be barren if associated with ritualism. Those trials were, indeed, necessary to overthrow the laborious structure of his religion of outward forms. But out of the melancholy ruins there was soon to emerge a new building on quite another plan, and made of better materials,—a building that would be able to withstand all storms.

CHAPTER V

CONVERSION OF JOHN WESLEY

(1738)

THE weeks Wesley spent on board the vessel that brought him back to England were to him of the highest value. While occupied, as in his former voyage, in promoting the spiritual interests of his fellow-passengers, his own condition was the subject of his deepest anxiety. His *Journal* is full of sad confessions, which betray a soul devoid of that peace which springs from simple faith. "I went to America," he says, "to convert the Indians; but oh! who shall convert me? Who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion; I can talk well; nay, and believe myself, while no danger is near; but let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, 'To die is gain.'. . . Oh! who will deliver me from this fear of death? What shall I do? Where shall I fly from it?"[1]

Five days later he writes: "It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country, in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity; but what have I learned myself in the meantime? Why (what I the least of all suspected), that I who went to America to convert others was never myself converted to God. . . . This, then, have I learned

[1] P. 74.

in the ends of the earth—that I am 'fallen short of the glory of God'; that my whole heart is 'altogether corrupt and abominable,' and consequently my whole life (seeing it cannot be that an 'evil tree' should 'bring forth good fruit'); that, 'alienated,' as I am, 'from the life of God,' I am 'a child of wrath,' an heir of hell; that my own works, my own sufferings, my own righteousness, are so far from reconciling me to an offended God, so far from making any atonement for the least of those sins, which 'are more in number than the hairs of my head,' that the most specious of them need an atonement themselves, or they cannot abide His righteous judgment; that 'having the sentence of death' in my heart, and having nothing in or of myself to plead, I have no hope, but that if I seek I shall find Christ, and 'be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.'" [1]

From these quotations we see that Wesley returned from America discouraged and depressed; he had at last learned to know himself, and with a bitter eloquence he describes in his *Journal* this phase of his spiritual life. From those melancholy lines we may well understand the intense agony of his inward conflicts.

Perhaps, however, it might be asked how far, in this new stage of experience which he had entered upon, Wesley did not yield to a common instinct of human nature in undervaluing the spiritual gifts received in the past. On this point, indeed, we can quote his own testimony laid down in writing long after, and when he had reached a state of Christian maturity. As he was reading over the above fragments of his *Journal* with a view to publication, he felt that they needed a qualifying note. Below the statement that he was not con-

[1] P. 75.

verted at the time he went to America, he wrote thus: "I am not sure of this"; and after the words, "I am 'a child of wrath,' an heir of hell," he adds these: "I believe not. . . . I had even then the faith of a *servant*, though not that of a *son*."[1]

Although Wesley thus qualified, at a later date, the wording of his confessions as written when he returned from Georgia, it cannot be said that he cancelled them at all, and they stand as a memorial of the peculiar experiences he went through at that momentous crisis in his life. We see there the symptoms and beginnings of something which is more than conversion, if by such a word the first turning of the soul to God is understood; and yet, this is conversion in the evangelical acceptation of the word. There can never be, indeed, a greater or more decisive change in a soul's course than the one we observe in the outpourings of a heart truly humbled and divested of all self-esteem, when we remember the mystical and ritualistic, but unevangelical, phases through which, as we have seen, this same man had passed.

Soon after landing at Deal, on the 1st of February 1738, John Wesley went up to London, where he was going to meet the simple and earnest Christians who would introduce him to that new way which he meant to follow. The Moravians already had done him much good. By coming into contact with the apostolic simplicity of this religious community, the prejudices of the High Churchman had been gradually shaken; but his conception of religion had undergone a still greater change through the influence of a truly evangelical type of Christianity. A Moravian did for Wesley what Ananias did for Saul at Damascus.

[1] P. 76. On this distinction between the faith of a servant and that of a son, it will be advantageous to refer to Wesley's sermon on Faith (vol. vii. p. 199).

In London, John Wesley immediately sought out the Moravians, to whom he had already been so greatly indebted. One of their ministers, Peter Böhler, had just arrived in England on his way to America. He was eminently qualified by his living and practical piety, as well as by his knowledge of Scripture, for the task God had assigned him in respect to Wesley. Their acquaintance commenced on the 7th of February 1738, "a day much to be remembered," as Wesley truly said. From that day forward his interviews with this distinguished Christian became frequent. With the humility of a little child the Oxford theologian sat at the Moravian minister's feet, laying all his difficulties before his new friend, who replied in Latin,—the language in which they conversed,—*Mi frater, mi frater, excoquenda est ista tua philosophia.* "My brother, my brother, that philosophy of yours must be purged away." It was purged away, and so completely that Wesley soon arrived at the conviction that he had hitherto been mistaken respecting the nature of true faith, supposing it to be a merely intellectual assent to revealed truth. His friend taught him, that wherever living faith exists it produces peace and holiness, and that this faith is nothing else but "a sure trust and confidence that a man hath in God, that through the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God." These ideas were new to Wesley, and raised certain objections in his mind; but Böhler, who did not want him to take his statements on trust, referred him to the Scriptures. Wesley began to read the Greek Testament anew, a study he had neglected under the influence of mystical writers. There he found strong corroboration of his friend's teaching; his objections vanished one by one before such declarations as, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God"; "He that believeth hath the

witness in Himself"; "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." But he "could not understand how this faith should be given in a moment," and how conversion could be instantaneous. These doubts, however, were dispelled by a conscientious study of the Scriptures, and by conversation with the Moravians, who testified how, in their own individual souls, the sense of condemnation had been exchanged in a moment for peace and joy through believing.

Hitherto Wesley had only possessed, as he acknowledged in later life, the faith of a servant; he had not yet the faith of a son. Oppressed by a sense of this defect, he wished to cease preaching. Böhler strongly dissuaded him from such a course, and said, "Preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith." This he did henceforward with the greatest fidelity, not merely from the pulpit but in everyday life, in his travels, at the inns at which he stayed, and in fact wherever opportunity offered. As his spiritual needs became clearer and more positive, he was led to disuse the forms of prayer he had generally employed in his private devotions, and to practise *extempore* prayer. At the same time, perceiving the many advantages of Christian fellowship, he fully identified himself with the little society that met in Fetter Lane, and which, by the advice of Böhler, was organised, on 1st May 1738, according to the rules of the Moravian brotherhood. The members were to meet once a week "to confess their faults one to another, and to pray one for another, in obedience to the command of God given by St. James."

Wesley then began to seek with great ardour that inward release, the importance of which he now fully understood. The following entry occurs in a letter to a friend about this time: "Yet I hear a voice (and is it

not the voice of God?) saying, 'Believe and thou shalt be saved. He that believeth is passed from death unto life. . . . O, Thou Saviour of men, save us from trusting in anything but Thee! Draw us after Thee! Let us be emptied of ourselves, and then fill us with all peace and joy in believing; and let nothing separate us from Thy love, in time or in eternity."[1]

"This gift," he continues, "I resolved to seek unto the end: (1) By absolutely renouncing all dependence, in whole or in part, upon *my own* works of righteousness, on which I had really grounded my hope of salvation, though I knew it not, from my youth up. (2) By adding to the constant use of all the other means of grace, continual prayer for this very thing, justifying, saving faith, a full reliance on the blood of Christ shed for *me*; a trust in Him as my Christ, as *my* sole justification, sanctification, and redemption."[2]

The day of deliverance dawned at last. We give the account in Wesley's own words: "I continued thus to seek it (though with great indifference, dulness, and unusually frequent relapses into sin), till Wednesday, 24th May. I think it was about five this morning that I opened my Testament on these words: 'There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: even that ye should be partakers of the Divine nature' (2 Pet. i. 4). Just as I went out, I opened it again on these words: 'Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God.' In the afternoon I was asked to go to St. Paul's. The anthem was, 'Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice. O let Thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint. If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? For there is mercy with Thee; therefore shalt Thou be feared. O Israel, trust in the

[1] P. 97. [2] P. 102.

Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his sins.' In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death. I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart. But it was not long before the enemy suggested, 'This cannot be faith; for where is thy joy?' Then was I taught that peace and victory over sin are essential to faith in the Captain of our salvation; but that, as to the transports of joy that usually attend the beginning of it, especially in those who have mourned deeply, God sometimes giveth, sometimes withholdeth them, according to the counsels of His own will."[1]

It is worthy of notice that it was the hearing of a page in Luther, itself a comment on a word of St. Paul, that brought perfect light to Wesley's soul. May not this coincidence be regarded as marking the connection between the revival of the eighteenth century, the Reformation, and the apostolic age? The new movement was, in fact, a renewal of those two great epochs in the Church, not only because it re-asserted the doctrine of justification by faith, but also because the experience of that divine blessing was exemplified in those who had to proclaim it to their fellow-men.

[1] P. 103.

Like Luther, and like St. Paul before Luther, John Wesley could say, "I believed, and therefore have I spoken."

"In Wesley we see the same internal conflict, the same transition from the works of the law to faith, as we see in Luther. And this emancipation from the bondage of the law, this deliverance of the soul striving after the assurance of salvation and the joy of faith, is neither a delusion nor a fanatical enthusiasm, as it has often been called by those who have wished to hold up Wesley to contempt. It is the forthputting of the long-concealed shoot, when at length it bursts its sheath. The soul, at last delivered from the yoke of the law and the bondage of sin, receives the assurance of salvation and the joy of faith; for, as Luther says, where the pardon of sin takes place, there follow life and peace."[1]

Dr. Stoughton has drawn, in a very luminous manner, a parallel between the two cases. "A comparison between Wesley and Luther is very instructive. In both cases a large space of time is covered with a succession of confessions which, to persons not in spiritual sympathy with the men, indicate important points of change and progress, apparently inconsistent, and extremely perplexing. Yet a fundamental difference existed between the mental character of the two. Luther had a mind eminently intuitional, glancing with an eagle's eye at truth whenever it rose before him; Wesley had a mind eminently logical, getting at his conclusions by paces of argument: hence it happened that Luther's theology sprung out of his experience, out of his deep-felt needs and their full supply; but Wesley's experience sprung out of his theology. First convinced of certain truths, he then applied them. He learned

[1] C. H. Schöll, article on "Methodism," in the *Real-Encyclopädie* of Herzog, vol. ix.

the doctrine of justification by faith before he exercised the faith which, in his apprehension, brought him into a justified condition."[1]

John Wesley's early life had been pure, and he never forsook the religious habits of his childhood. In 1725, at the University of Oxford, we see him lying under a deep sense of sin, and sighing after an absolute consecration of his whole being to God. That craving for holiness, which was fostered by his mother's letters and by the reading of *The Imitation* and *The Rules of Holy Living*, soon led him astray into the bypaths of ritualism and mysticism. For these two religious tendencies, which would appear contradictory from a logical point of view, had alternately swayed Wesley's mind during those painful years of transition. Dr. Rigg very judiciously observes: "With all his punctilious ritualism, there was curiously intermixed, during nearly the whole of these seven years (1730–1737), a strong tincture of mystical tendency and influence. This element represented the reaction, in such a true and earnest soul as Wesley's, of the inward against the merely outward. Through all his life, indeed, Wesley was resolute to maintain the union of outward godliness and religious observance with inward and spiritual contemplation and affection. But during the period of which we are now speaking he had not found, in the 'righteousness of faith,' the true *nexus* and harmony between these antithetic necessities. Hence, at this period, the intermixture of ritualism and mysticism, and the oscillations from one to the other. Never ceasing to be outwardly the strict and ascetic High Churchman, Wesley, in his inward sympathies and longings, found himself strongly attracted by the union of contemplation and passion in

[1] Stoughton, *Religion in England under Queen Anne and the Georges*, vol. i. p. 374.

the writings of the best class of devotional mystics, and was himself often a mystic at heart."[1]

If ever a spiritual crisis revolutionised the course of a man's life, it was that which for John Wesley culminated in the experiences of the 24th of May 1738. But for that crisis he would all his life have been an accomplished Pharisee, like Saul of Tarsus, or a bigoted ritualist, as Luther was before his conversion. Thanks to that crisis, Wesley became an apostle, like the first of these men, and a reformer like the second.

Charles Wesley had already reached the same goal as his brother, and by a similar route. Three days earlier he had found the assurance of pardon at the foot of the Cross. George Whitefield, their old Oxford friend, had preceded them in the same path; while they were in Georgia, seeking salvation by their own works, he had already become a new man. Thus were providentially prepared for their sacred work the three principal labourers in the great awakening destined to overspread England.

John Wesley was deeply indebted to the Moravians for his introduction to a Christianity vastly superior, in living energy, to anything he had hitherto known. This Church appeared to him to have understood, better than any other, the vital and practical character of Christian truth; and he loved it with filial affection. At the decisive epoch in his spiritual life which he had now reached, he thought the time had come when he might fulfil a project formed in Georgia, and visit the home of this Christian community in order to become better acquainted with it. This journey, partaking of the character of a religious pilgrimage and of an act of filial devotion, he now accordingly undertook in company with a few friends.

[1] James H. Rigg, *The Living Wesley*, p. 110

At Ysselstein, near Rotterdam, he found a small colony of Moravians, established in the territory of the Dowager Princess of Orange, and spent some agreeable hours under the roof of the pious Baron de Watteville. At Marienborn, near Frankfort, he met Count Zinzendorf, whom he had long wished to see. His conversations with this eminent Christian were useful and pleasant. "And here," says he, "I continually met with what I sought for, viz., living proofs of the power of faith; persons saved from inward as well as outward sin by 'the love of God shed abroad in their hearts,' and from all doubt and fear by the abiding witness of 'the Holy Ghost given unto them.'"[1]

After spending twelve days in the little colony at Marienborn, Wesley resumed his journey to Hernhuth, the seat of the principal Moravian community. He traversed a considerable part of Germany on foot, and at length, on the 1st of August 1738, arrived at this celebrated village, situated on the borders of Bohemia, which occupies a loftier place in Church history than many cities of renown. Here he saw in full activity a form of Christianity strongly contrasting with the Anglican, which alone he had hitherto really known. Already connected by spiritual ties with the Moravian Church, he studied it closely and with deep sympathy. Writing to his brother Samuel, he says: "God has given me at length the desire of my heart. I am with a Church whose conversation is in heaven, in whom is the mind of Christ, the spirit of meekness and love, which uniformly and continually animates all their conversation. Oh, how high and holy a thing Christianity is, and how widely different from that which is so called, though it neither purifies the

[1] P. 110.

heart nor renews the life after the image of our blessed Redeemer!"[1]

By his intercourse with the Moravians, Wesley was confirmed in the views of justification by faith which he had learned from Böhler. Few men were more useful to him in that respect than the pious Christian David, at once an artisan and a pastor, who with his own hands had built the first houses in the colony, and whose preaching and example had largely contributed to its spiritual edification. His conversation and discourses brought fresh light to Wesley's mind. Intercourse with such Christians could not but exert the happiest influence on his religious character and ministerial usefulness. From them he learned the power of living faith, and how it produces in the soul ardent love to the Saviour and to all Christians, and a total renunciation of the world and self.

What particularly impressed him at Hernhuth was the actual realisation of a society pervaded by a truly Christian spirit. "I would gladly," said he, "have spent my life here; but my Master calling me to labour in other parts of His vineyard, I was constrained to take my leave of this happy place." The "city of God" he had seen in the heart of Germany he would now try to reproduce in England, with such modifications as were rendered necessary by the difference in the genius of the two nations.

"Methodism," says an historian, "owes to Moravianism special obligations. First, it introduced Wesley into that regenerated spiritual life the supremacy of which over all ecclesiasticism and dogmatism it was the appointed mission of Methodism to reassert and promote in the Protestant world. Secondly, Wesley derived from it some of his clearest conceptions of the theological

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xiii. p. 31.

ideas which he was to propagate as essentially related to this spiritual life. . . . Thirdly, Zinzendorf's communities were based upon Spener's plan of reforming the Established Churches, by forming 'little churches,' *ecclesiolæ*, 'within them,' in despair of maintaining spiritual life among them otherwise. And fourthly, not only in this general analogy, but in many details of his discipline, can we trace the influence of Moravianism."[1]

[1] Stevens, *History of Methodism*, vol. i. p. 103 (American edition).

Book Second

THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE WORK
(1738–1744)

LIBRARY
HOPKINS MARITIME
NAVAL MUSEUM

CHAPTER I

BIRTH OF THE MOVEMENT

(1738–1739)

WESLEY returned from Germany in September 1738. His soul was overflowing with desire to devote its energies to God, but as yet he knew not the way by which the Lord was about to lead him. He had, indeed, no preconceived plan. Having a strong faith in the providence of God, it became his habit day by day to expect indications of the course he was to follow, taking no more thought for to-morrow's labours than for to-morrow's bread, and looking to God to mete out the one as well as the other. He immediately commenced to labour with the greatest ardour, in the modest sphere which had become to him like a spiritual family. There were still in existence in London several of the small religious societies founded by Horneck and his friends, the greater part of which, owing to the spiritual declension of the age, had been dissolved. Those which yet remained had recently been quickened by the Moravians. These centres of religious life had, of course, a strong attraction for Wesley at a time when he was chiefly desirous of spiritual progress and brotherly fellowship. Without losing any of his great attachment to the Church of England, he felt a deeper sympathy for the Moravian community in London than

for those official clergymen who were wont to disdain what they called "conventicles."[1] Both he and his brother became active members of the community, and hardly a day passed without their speaking in the meetings.

But Wesley could not confine his zeal within the narrow limits of these small societies. He was drawn, as by an irresistible spell, toward the ignorant and degraded masses for whose souls no man cared. But people of this class rarely crossed the threshold of a church. To gain access to them Wesley resolved to go out to them. He would, however, have hesitated long before coming to such a decision had not the Anglican Church hastened it by closing their pulpits against him. He preached in several churches, both in London and the provinces, as his episcopal ordination gave him the legal right to do. In his sermons he boldly announced the great evangelical doctrine of justification by faith, pressing it home upon the minds of men with the powerful earnestness which only a personal experience of salvation can inspire. This was a new thing, and it scandalised many. He was charged with innovation and heresy, and threatened with exclusion from the pulpits of churches if he persisted in preaching this new-fangled creed. The old charge this, always levelled in times of declension against those who would resuscitate the pristine faith; but Wesley was not moved. Docile and devoted as he was to the interests of the Church on all points of discipline,[2] he

[1] Five weeks after returning from Germany, Wesley and his brother paid a visit to Dr. Edmund Gibson, the Bishop of London, and asked him whether, in his opinion, religious societies had anything to do with the law concerning "conventicles." He answered, "I think not; but I determine nothing." And he strongly advised them to study that point of law. But they had things more important to attend to.

[2] He was at that time so much blinded by ecclesiastical superstition

refused to yield upon a point of doctrine; and appealed from the Church of that degenerate age to the Church of Cranmer and Latimer, the Church of the Thirty-nine Articles. "The doctrines we preach," he exclaims, "are the doctrines of the Church of England; indeed, the fundamental doctrines of the Church, clearly laid down, both in her Prayers, Articles, and Homilies. I differ in no point from those who adhere to them, but I differ from that part of the clergy who dissent from the Church."[1]

One after the other the pulpits in which Wesley had preached were closed against him. In the course of the year 1739 he could preach only in four churches in London, and four in the provinces. A clergyman had once invited him to preach, but as he was starting for the church Wesley received counter-orders, with the not very flattering explanation that, having heard that he was beside himself, the minister did not care he should preach for him.[2] Another day, having to preach twice in the same place, he intended to conclude his subject in the afternoon, but the clergyman interfered to prevent the sermon. "A good remembrance" (or reminder), says Wesley, "that I should, if possible, declare at every time the whole counsel of God."[3]

Though expelled from the sanctuaries, Wesley did not slacken his activity. He regularly visited the prisoners at Newgate, and preached the gospel to them. In this course of humble labour he was occasionally rewarded by success. In November 1738 we find him upon the tumbril of the executioner, in company with a condemned malefactor who, having been converted

that he went as far as to re-baptize Dissenters, a thing which the Bishop of London himself qualified as being an exaggeration.

[1] Wesley's *Journal*, 13th September 1739.

[2] *Ibid.*, 7th May 1739.

[3] *Ibid.*, 18th February 1739.

through his instrumentality, desired him to be present with him in his last hours. A few moments before he died, on being asked by Wesley, "How do you feel your heart now?" the condemned criminal replied, "I feel a peace which I could not have believed to be possible. And I know it is the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." Charles Wesley, who had accompanied his brother, addressed a few words of exhortation to the crowd; and on the evening of the same day John wrote in his *Journal*, "O Lord God of my fathers, accept even me among them, and cast me not out from among Thy children!"[1]

Amid these lowly evangelistic labours Wesley concluded the year 1738. At this time the principal members of the band of Oxford students were together in London. Charles Wesley, a most zealous ally of his brother John, like him attained the honour of expulsion from the metropolitan pulpits. Whitefield, just arrived from America, where he had been more successful than the Wesleys, was about to experience the same treatment on the part of the Church officials.

On the first day of January 1739 the two Wesleys, Whitefield, Ingham, Hall, and Kinchin were present at a love-feast in Fetter Lane, with the little community of the Moravian Brethren. The year that was to witness the birth of the great Revival was commenced by them in mutual prayer. This meeting was, according to Whitefield's testimony, "a pentecostal season indeed." Five days later they met again, to confer together as to what was best to be done in the circumstances in which they now found themselves placed. They spent the day in fasting and prayer, and parted "with a full conviction," as Whitefield said, "that God was about to do great things among them."

[1] *Journal*, 8th November 1738.

The campaign that was about to commence still wanted, however, its battlefield. This arena was furnished by open-air preaching, and to Whitefield belongs the honour of having been the first to occupy it. Though thousands had hitherto flocked to the churches to hear him, he had to undergo the same treatment as his friends: in three days five pulpits were closed against him. In the face of this increasing opposition, this brave young man of five-and-twenty did not hesitate long: he resolved to preach in the open air. Opportunity was soon offered for carrying his design into effect. At a little distance from Bristol is a place called Kingswood, then inhabited by a colliery population. These poor people were scarcely civilised. They had neither churches nor ministers, and none cared for the interests of their souls. There were no schools in that neighbourhood, and the people lived in the most abject ignorance. Their ferocity was proverbial, and not long before, in the course of a riot, they had committed all sorts of wicked deeds, and had to be put down by armed force. During a visit that Whitefield paid to Bristol he learned that some people had said of him, "If he will convert heathens, why does he not go to the colliers of Kingswood?" Finding his hands tied at Bristol, as elsewhere, by the ill-will of the clergy, he decided to try that experiment. One evening the report of his arrival spread through Kingswood, and soon he found himself before a congregation of about two hundred colliers, to whom he preached the gospel from the top of a hillock. This was Saturday, the 17th of February 1739, a memorable date in the history of the English Revival, seeing that on that day the ground was chosen on which were to be gained many glorious victories. Encouraged by the success of this first attempt, Whitefield continued his open-air preaching at Kingswood. On his second

visit he had two thousand hearers, on his third from four to five thousand, and the numbers speedily mounted to ten, fifteen, and twenty thousand. Nothing could be more affecting than the sight of these immense crowds listening spellbound and with astonishment to the great preacher; and frequently the silent tears, overflowing the eyes of the colliers, and leaving the traces of their passage upon their dusky cheeks, testified that his word had found an echo in their hearts. Numerous conversions rewarded the labours of the young missionary.

Shortly after Whitefield preached at Bristol itself in a public garden, and complete success attended this new experiment. But he was anxious to visit other parts of England before returning to America, where urgent duties were awaiting him. Unwilling to leave his new converts without a pastor, he wrote to his friend Wesley, and begged him to come to Bristol in order to carry on the work. After some hesitation the latter complied with this request, and left London. Arrived at Bristol, he debated with himself whether he ought to follow the example of his friend, and preach in the open air too. "I could scarcely reconcile myself at first," he says, "to this strange way of preaching in the fields, having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church."[1]

He did not hesitate long; the voice of his calling was stronger than that of his prejudices, and on the 2nd of April he preached to three thousand people in a meadow adjoining Bristol. From this moment the Revival of the eighteenth century entered upon its proper course, in which it was to be blessed with glorious success. In exchanging the regular pulpit for the

[1] Wesley's *Journal*, 31st March 1739.

public places, Christian preaching threw off what was artificial and affected, and began to speak to the common people in the language of the common people.

Called now to carry on the work which his friend Whitefield had commenced at Bristol, Wesley devoted himself to it with great ardour; he also knew how to consolidate it by uniting the few already awakened in the bonds of an extremely simple organisation. He formed them into little societies after the model of those of London. These were the first which he actually founded himself; and they may be considered as the first class-meetings, although they did not yet bear that name. Wesley speaks of them in his *Journal*, April the 4th, 1739, in the following terms: "In the evening three women agreed to meet together weekly, with the same intention as those at London, viz., 'to confess their faults one to another, and pray for one another, that they may be healed.' How dare any man deny this to be (as to the substance of it) a means of grace ordained by God? Unless he will affirm (with Luther in the fury of his solifidianism) that St. James's Epistle is an epistle of straw." These small societies began almost immediately to increase in numbers, so much so that Wesley found himself obliged to build a place of worship for their accommodation. On the 12th of May 1739, "with the voice of praise and thanksgiving," he solemnly laid the foundation of the humble structure, the first Methodist chapel ever built. His friends at Bristol brought him some small subscriptions, and he valiantly assumed the responsibility of the undertaking. "Money, it is true," says he, "I had not, nor any human prospect or probability of procuring it; but I knew 'the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof,' and in His name set out, nothing doubting."[1]

[1] *Journal*, 12th May 1739.

Towards the end of that same year Wesley bought, for the use of the societies in London, an old building which had been a gun-foundry. He had it repaired, and some galleries added. In that very plain house the Methodists of London worshipped God for many years.

Wesley was actively employed also among the colliers of Kingswood. Whitefield had laid the corner-stone of a school for them. Wesley superintended the erection of it, and, on its completion, put there John Cennick as the schoolmaster. This was an excellent basis for the work of evangelisation, which itself continued to prosper. The people joyfully received the glad tidings of the gospel to which they had hitherto been strangers, and Kingswood soon became a changed place. It was no longer, as formerly, a haunt of debauchery and drunkenness; fighting and quarrelling gave place to harmony and peace, sacred hymns succeeded to lewd songs, and prayer to blasphemy.

As a result of the preaching of Whitefield and Wesley, new wants were created among these converted colliers. Desirous of partaking of the Lord's Supper, they repaired to the Bristol churches in such numbers that the regular ministers, unaccustomed to such manifestations of devotional feeling, and alarmed at the additional labour they entailed upon them, repelled them from the Lord's Table under the pretext that they did not belong to their parish. Thus abandoned by their official pastors, the colliers clung more closely than ever to the zealous missionaries who had awakened them from spiritual slumber. John Wesley extended his pastoral labours to the towns and villages in the neighbourhood of Bristol, and already preached three times a day on an average, and at places often remote from each other. It has been calculated that, in the last nine months of that year, 1739, he preached no fewer than five hundred

times, and only eight or ten of those services were held in churches. The new facilities afforded him by open-air preaching rendered it no longer necessary for him to confine himself within the narrow limits of a parish, or within the still narrower limits of the good pleasure of those ministers who might grant him the use of their pulpits. From that time forward his preaching produced astonishing effects. Immense crowds assembled in the public places where he preached; neither rain nor storm could disperse them.

At Blackheath, John Wesley addressed twelve thousand people; at Gloucester, seven thousand. But it was in London that his audiences were the most numerous. In Moorfields and at Kennington Common, as many as twenty thousand attended. Those crowds, which met in the open air to listen to Wesley and to his friends, are thus described by an historian. "Their congregations were composed of every description of persons, who, without the slightest attempt at order, assembled, crying 'Hurrah!' with one breath, and with the next bellowing and bursting into tears on account of their sins; some poking each other's ribs, and others shouting 'Halleluiah.' It was a jumble of extremes of good and evil, and so distracted alike were both preachers and hearers, that it was enough to make one cry to God for His interference. Here thieves, prostitutes, fools, people of every class, several men of distinction, a few of the learned, merchants, and numbers of poor people who had never entered a place of worship, assembled in crowds and became godly."[1]

In general, Wesley's hearers, at that early period of the Revival, were animated with friendly feelings. More than once the people testified their sympathy and gratitude by defending him against those who would

[1] Hutton's *Memoirs*, p. 42, as quoted by Tyerman, vol. i. p. 236.

have interrupted his preaching. On one occasion two men disturbed the congregation by singing a song; Wesley gave out a hymn, which was sung with so much spirit by the whole assembly as to drown the voices of the disturbers. At Bath a certain personage, well known for his irregular life and love of good cheer, undertook to embarrass John Wesley by publicly cross-questioning him. But his scheme failed, and then with an angry voice he exclaimed, "I desire to know what this people comes here for." Thereupon one in the assembly replied, "Sir, leave him to me, let an old woman answer him. You, Mr. Nash, take care of your body, we take care of our souls."[1] The blow had been dealt so judiciously that Nash was struck dumb and soon vanished from the place.

Wesley aimed at something higher than evoking a fit of enthusiasm, which might soon prove evanescent. From the very commencement of his mission he had witnessed numerous conversions. What appears the most striking in the records of these conversions is, that they were usually instantaneous, they were like thunder-claps, and one can scarcely help being reminded by them of some analogous facts of apostolic times. These inward experiences were sometimes accompanied by extreme physical prostration and a kind of convulsion of the whole being. Men in perfect health, led by curiosity to the services, were convinced of sin under the word, and fell to the ground in a deadly swoon, or lay groaning in anguish. They remained sometimes in this state of moral and physical agony for hours, sometimes for days, and then in a moment their distress gave place to an abounding joy.

In London also, shortly after his return from Germany, Wesley saw similar effects produced by his preaching.

[1] *Journal*, 5th June 1739.

One day, while he was speaking at one of his private meetings, a lady uttered a cry of distress. On his inquiring what was the cause, she told him the day after, that for three years she had been under strong convictions of sin, that her husband, not understanding her grief, had consulted a clergyman, and after that a doctor, neither of whom understood her case; they thought she was mad, but the preaching she had heard the night before had shown her the way of salvation.

At another time he met with one of those persons, so numerous in those days, who stigmatised his work as a dangerous novelty, and seemed greatly exasperated against him. "Finding argument to be of no other effect than to inflame her more and more," and suspecting that this opposition sprang from an attempt to stifle an already awakened conscience, he proposed prayer. "In a few minutes she fell into an extreme agony, both of body and soul, and soon after cried out with the utmost earnestness: 'Now I know I am forgiven for Christ's sake.' And from that hour God set her face as a flint to declare the faith which before she persecuted."[1]

At Bristol the results of his first preaching were the same, and conversions were attended by still more remarkable signs. The services were continually interrupted by the cries and sobs of the hearers seeking mercy. Conversions took place, accompanied by the most diversified and extraordinary incidents. At one time it is a mother, displeased at her daughter's pious life, who is herself seized by convictions and falls down in anguish, but revives under Wesley's prayers, and returns home with her daughter full of joy. A traveller, passing near the place where Wesley is preaching, stops to listen, soon he becomes pale, falls to the ground as if struck by an invisible hand, and prays to God to

[1] *Journal*, 2nd March 1739.

forgive him. At another time a member of the Society of Friends was offended at the external manifestations; while showing his disapprobation at one of the meetings, he fell prostrate as if struck by a thunderbolt, and writhed in agony. Wesley pleaded on his behalf, and when the man came to himself he exclaimed: "Now I know thou art a prophet of the Lord." At the same meeting there was present a weaver, a strong Churchman, who had come to examine into these things for himself. He carried away with him a very unfavourable opinion, and everywhere spread it abroad that it was all a diabolical delusion. But Wesley's preaching had made a deeper impression than the man was willing to confess even to himself. The next day, finding himself very uneasy in mind, he took up one of Wesley's sermons, on Salvation by Faith; while he was reading it, he changed colour and fell to the ground, burdened with inexpressible anguish. The neighbours were alarmed and flocked to the house. They found him rolling on the ground, and screaming in an agony of despair. Two or three men tried to quiet him, but in vain. They ran to fetch Wesley; as soon as the poor man saw him, he cried out, "Ay, this is he who I said was a deceiver of the people. But God has overtaken me. I said it was all a delusion; but this is no delusion." He then roared out: "O thou devil! thou cursed devil! yea, thou legion of devils! thou canst not stay. Christ will cast thee out. I know His work is begun. Tear me to pieces, if thou wilt; but thou canst not hurt me." Wesley prayed, "his pangs ceased, and both his body and soul were set at liberty."[1]

It should be said, however, that cases so extraordinary as this last were extremely rare, even at the beginning of Wesley's ministry. What was not rare at this period

[1] *Journal*, 2nd May 1739.

was for his preaching to be interrupted by the deep emotions of the multitude, and his voice drowned amid the groans of the penitents. After a time these scenes became less common, and the Spirit of God wrought in a more gentle and uniform manner. Wesley carefully records facts like those we have just described, but scrupulously abstains from offering an explanation of them. So far from regarding physical prostrations as essential elements of conversion, as it has been affirmed without proof, he believed them to be either a device of the evil spirit or else the natural consequence of deep inward anguish of soul. He therefore took care not to encourage, much less to provoke, these manifestations. His preaching had nothing in it to inflame the imagination: always calm and sober, it derived its power not from exaggerations, but from a firm assertion of the truth.

To those who were scandalised by these scenes (and they were many) he said, "Come and see." A doctor at Bristol, full of prejudices against this work, wished to ascertain the truth for himself, and came to one of Wesley's meetings. A lady of his acquaintance, who was in perfect health, and of whose integrity he had no doubt, was that very day struck down by the word, and, while he was present, fell into a state of great physical and mental anguish. The doctor watched the various symptoms with great attention, and when, after the lapse of some minutes, she was filled with peace and joy, he rose up and went away, declaring that the matter baffled all his science, and that he recognised in it the finger of God.[1]

To his eldest brother, Samuel, who was greatly scandalised by these instantaneous conversions, and who severely criticised the entire movement, John Wesley wrote: "The question turns chiefly, if not wholly, on

[1] *Journal*, 29th April 1739.

matter of fact. You deny that God does now work these effects; at least, that He works them in this manner. I affirm both, because I have heard these things with my own ears, and have seen them with my eyes. I have seen, as far as a thing of this kind can be seen, very many persons changed in a moment from the spirit of fear, horror, despair, to the spirit of love, joy, and peace; and from sinful desire, till then reigning over them, to a pure desire of doing the will of God. . . . I will show you him that was a lion till then, and is now a lamb; him that was a drunkard, and is now exemplarly sober; the whoremonger that was, who now abhors the very garment spotted by the flesh. These are my living arguments for what I assert."[1]

These are, undoubtedly, the best arguments. Let it not be forgotten, however, that physical manifestations have almost always accompanied the preaching of the gospel during revivals that have followed long periods of spiritual torpor. It seems as though a more powerful shaking and a deeper crisis were required in the case of souls thus suddenly becoming conscious of their low

[1] *Journal*, 20th May 1739. Samuel Wesley was not convinced, and in November of this same year we find him writing as follows to their mother, who had become a firm supporter of Methodism in its early stage: "It was with exceeding concern and grief I heard you had countenanced a spreading delusion, so far as to be one of Jack's congregation. Is it not enough that I am bereft of both my brothers, but must my mother follow too? I earnestly beseech the Almighty to preserve you from joining a schism at the close of your life, as you were unfortunately engaged in one at the beginning of it" (Tyerman, vol. i. p. 286). The last words were an allusion to Susannah Wesley having been a Puritan in her youth. Samuel goes on, in that letter, charging his brothers with an intention of becoming Dissenters, and complaining bitterly of their open-air preaching, *ex-tempore* prayers, etc. A few weeks after he had written this letter, he died "in the full assurance of faith." His heart was honest and truly pious, though his Church prejudices would not allow him to understand how great was the work his brothers were accomplishing.

estate. In the eighteenth century the preaching of salvation by faith was a novelty in England. Hence the amazement and agitation it produced in the minds of those who received the doctrine. Wesley, according to the apostolic method, preached the law as well as the gospel. He showed in a strong light the heinousness of sin, and the deplorable consequences to which it leads in this world and in the next. Such bold preaching was in perfect contrast with the classical performances of church ministers, and it could not fail to make an impression. It was not addressed to the imagination or the sensibilities: it was one continuous appeal to the conscience.

Who does not know that physical excitement is an ordinary effect of strong moral emotions? This is especially true of the masses, who have not acquired the art of disguising their feelings. Whilst a man who has learned by education the art of controlling his feelings will suffer silently and hide his grief within himself, the ordinary individual, under the stroke of affliction, will burst out in sobs and even in shouts. Besides, the emotions of repentance are precisely those that educated people themselves can with difficulty repress. But a common man from the people, in such a case, feels so intensely that it brings on a kind of agony. He suffers in his whole being, body and soul; and, when the moral crisis is at its highest, it induces a general prostration.

In the foregoing remarks we have designed to answer, once for all, the objections raised on account of some incidents in Wesley's ministry, since it seemed proper to repel the charge of visionary enthusiasm which has been so unjustly directed against him. We will now resume our narrative of his life.

While Wesley made Bristol the centre from which

he extended his labours through all the surrounding districts, his brother Charles was accomplishing a similar work in London with Whitefield, who delayed his return to America on account of the crowds that flocked to his preaching and refused to let him go. In the metropolis, as at Bristol, he was the first to preach in the open air, having chosen for his field of operations the large plain of Moorfields, the ordinary resort of mountebanks and quacks of all kinds, and where he often preached to an audience of twenty or thirty thousand. John Wesley, having visited London in the course of the month of June, preached there also, to the great joy of his friend, who wrote in his *Journal*: "I went to bed rejoicing that another fresh inroad was made into Satan's territories, by Mr. Wesley following me in field-preaching in London, as well as in Bristol."[1]

This new work excited strong opposition on the part of the clergy. Nothing can compare with the bitter anger they displayed, but the placid temper which was shown throughout the conflict by the early Methodists. The official ministers, whose quiet had been disturbed by the activity of the new and fervid missionaries, thundered against them from their pulpits, declaring that they preached faith without works, and thus sapped the foundations of all morality.

Several of the sermons levelled at them were printed, and have been preserved. But they are generally very poor and weak productions. Newspapers and pamphlets also denounced, in prose and in verse, but with equal violence and dishonesty even, those "fanatics" who had the impudence to believe the gospel with their whole heart, and to proclaim it with the earnestness of strong convictions. In 1739 alone, at least twenty of those attacks against Methodism were written and printed.

[1] Tyerman, *Life of Whitefield*, vol. i. p. 245.

But that fact itself shows what a large place it had conquered in a few months.[1]

The bishops, also, were alarmed at their progress. They beheld with amazement a movement which at first appeared the dream of a few young enthusiasts, and they thought something must be done in order to check it. Charles Wesley was cited to appear before the Archbishop of Canterbury to give an account of his "irregular conduct," irregularity being, in the eyes of many, a sufficient test of the doings of those young men. The prelate reprimanded him smartly, and gave him to understand that, unless he and his brother renounced their new mode of action, they would expose themselves to the penalties of the ecclesiastical canons, and even to excommunication itself. For a moment these threats intimidated Charles Wesley. Happily, the ardent Whitefield was still at hand, and by his advice Charles went to Moorfields on the following Sunday, and for the first time preached under the open canopy of heaven to ten thousand people. That was the best reply which he could make to the prelate's menaces. By this courageous conduct he cut off all possible retreat, and boldly proclaimed that he regarded the voice of conscience more than that of an archbishop.[2]

[1] Mr. Tyerman has analysed most of those writings in his *Life of Wesley*, vol. i. pp. 247–254.

[2] Thos. Jackson, *Memoirs of the Rev. Charles Wesley, M.A.*, 1875, p. 82. This is the way Charles Wesley (according to his private *Journal*) employed the Sunday that followed his being summoned to the archiepiscopal palace at Lambeth. Early in the morning he preached at Moorfields to ten thousand people. After that he attended the Church of England service in St. Paul's Cathedral, and partook of the Lord's Supper there. In the afternoon he preached again twice, at Newington Hill and on Kennington Common, where he had crowded audiences. In the evening he attended a love-feast of the Moravians in Fetter Lane Hall. And this was the habitual work accomplished on Sundays by the brothers Wesley and by Whitefield.

The ecclesiastical authorities at Bristol were no better disposed, and John Wesley was in his turn summoned to appear before the bishop of that diocese. After a theological discussion on salvation by faith, in which the advantage certainly did not lie with the prelate, the latter attacked Wesley and his friends with much bitterness, accusing them of pretending to receive extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost; then he inveighed strongly against his erratic courses, and said loftily: "Sir, you have no business here. You are not commissioned to preach in this diocese. Therefore I advise you to go hence." Wesley replied firmly: "My lord, my business on earth is to do what good I can. Wherever, therefore, I think I can do most good, there must I stay so long as I think so. At present I think I can do most good here; therefore here I stay. As to my preaching here, a dispensation of the gospel is committed to me, and woe is me if I preach not the gospel wherever I am in the habitable world! Your lordship knows, being ordained a priest, by the commission I then received, I am a priest of the Church universal; and being ordained as Fellow of a College, I was not limited to any particular cure, but have an indeterminate commission to preach the Word of God in any part of the Church of England. I do not therefore conceive that, in preaching here by this commission, I break any human law. When I am convinced I do, then it will be time to ask, 'Shall I obey God or man?'"[1]

A minister of the universal Church, Wesley most truly was, and less disposed than ever to confine his labours within the limits of a parish. Some of his friends suggested, at that time, that he ought to resume the functions he had filled at Oxford before he went to America. This was his answer: "I have no business

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xiii. p. 499.

at college, having now no office and no pupils; and it will be time enough to consider whether I ought to accept a cure of souls when one is offered to me. On scriptural grounds, I do not think it hard to justify what I am doing. God, in Scripture, commands me, according to my power, to instruct the ignorant, reform the wicked, confirm the virtuous. Man forbids me to do this in another's parish; that is, in effect, not to do it at all, seeing I have now no parish of my own, nor probably ever shall. Whom then shall I hear? God or man? If it be just to obey man rather than God, judge ye. *I look upon all the world as my parish*; thus far, I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare unto all that are willing to hear the glad tidings of salvation."[1]

From Bristol, which continued for the present to be his headquarters, he extended his operations not only over the whole immediate neighbourhood, but through Wales, and Devonshire, to London and Oxford, thus anticipating that peaceful invasion of the whole country of which he was to be the leader in subsequent years: everywhere he saw multitudes flocking around him, and found that many souls were ripe for the gospel. Thus was inaugurated the plan of itinerant preaching which enabled him, by the aid of a few labourers, to extend his operations far and wide, and which was to become one of the constituent elements of his ecclesiastical organisation. It was with this feature of the work as with the rest—it sprang from the exigencies of his position.

The province of Wales, which John Wesley visited at that time, was then inhabited by people almost as wild and as ignorant of the gospel as were the American Indians. That part of the population, being isolated from the rest of Great Britain by its language and

[1] Tyerman, *Life and Times of Wesley*, vol. i. p. 235.

manners, seemed shut up in its peninsula so as to escape from feeling the current of religious ideas. But providence provided a special agent for that special work. Howell Harris, who was born at Trevecca in 1714, had obtained inward peace several months before the two Wesleys left for Georgia, and he was not acquainted with them. Seized with an earnest desire of spreading the truth among his countrymen, he went to Oxford in order to qualify himself for the ministry. But he was so shocked with the absence of piety he found there, that he left in disgust and went back to his mountain home, where he began to preach the gospel without degrees and without ordination. This was in 1736, consequently more than two years before John Wesley came. Harris met with great opposition, but he was not discouraged, and soon had the happiness of witnessing a remarkable revival. He went from place to place, assembling the people in farms or in the open air, establishing schools and fulfilling with success all the functions of an evangelist. When Whitefield met him for the first time at Cardiff in 1739, and when John Wesley saw him at work about the same date, they recognised in him a fellow-labourer whom the Master had raised without their knowledge. And Whitefield wrote as follows about him: "A burning and shining light has he been in those parts; a barrier against profaneness and immorality, and an indefatigable promoter of the true gospel of Jesus Christ. About three or four years God has inclined him to go about doing good. . . . For these three years he has discoursed almost twice every day for three or four hours together. . . . He has been in seven counties. . . . He has established near thirty societies, and still his sphere of action is enlarged daily."[1]

[1] Tyerman, *Life of Whitefield*, vol. i. p. 188.

Thus whilst the great Revival was preparing in England, a similar work was going on independently in the principality of Wales. In Scotland also, and in the American colonies, remarkable religious movements were taking place. At last the fire of Christian life and zeal, which so long had seemed extinguished, burst out spontaneously in several directions at the same moment. Those coincidences remind us of what happened at the Reformation, and they sufficiently characterise the eighteenth-century Revival as one of those movements which are initiated by God Himself.

Howell Harris was a layman, but to him belongs the honour of having begun lay-preaching in Wales in the eighteenth century. That novel practice was so very bold that it could not fail to shock the ecclesiastical notions and ways of John Wesley. But he had to submit, when he witnessed how visibly God's approval rested on the labours of that modest worker. And thus he wrote: "Now, what spirit is he of, who had rather these poor creatures should perish for lack of knowledge than that they should be saved, even by the exhortations of Howell Harris, or an itinerant preacher?"

It was not in Wales alone that John Wesley's prejudices had to yield to stubborn facts, in respect to the right of laymen to preach the gospel. John Cennick had been appointed by Whitefield and Wesley as head-master of the school they established at Kingswood. One day, when the colliers were assembled under a sycamore tree, and the preacher did not come, this man was persuaded by them to speak in his stead. "The Lord," said he, "bore witness with my words, insomuch that many believed in that hour." John Cennick went on exhorting successfully at Kingswood, and in the neighbourhood; but Wesley, far from stopping him,

employed him occasionally to fill his place at Bristol. At that time, however, he considered such things as being rather exceptional than regular. It was only two or three years later, when enlightened by experience and necessity, that he decided to adopt lay-preaching as a fixed institution.

Whitefield did not approve at first of laymen thus intruding on the functions of ministers. He wrote to Wesley, on the 25th of June 1739, as follows: "I suspend my judgment of Brother Watkins' and Cennick's behaviour till I am better acquainted with the circumstances of their proceeding. I think there is a great difference between them and Howell Harris. He has offered himself thrice for holy orders; him therefore, and our friends at Cambridge, I shall encourage: others I cannot countenance in acting in so public a manner. The consequence of beginning to teach too soon will be exceedingly bad. Brother Ingham is of my opinion."[1]

That year, 1739, was a decisive date in the history of the Revival. The southern counties of England, some places in the Midlands and in Wales, had heard the voice of missionaries. Open-air preaching had brought them into contact with the masses. By forsaking a sedentary life, and embracing the toils and dangers of itinerancy, they were enabled, although very few, to achieve an immense work. Lay agency, as yet in its infancy, was already beginning to afford them a most important help. Numerous conversions were taking place; the recruits were organised into societies and classes. Two chapels and a school were built. As a seal stamped upon the work to testify of its genuineness, opposition had met the Revival, and day by day it increased: since they fought against it, evidently the movement was making an impression. At the beginning

[1] Tyerman, *Life of Wesley*, vol. i. p. 277.

of that year Wesley and his friends had expressed their strong conviction that "great things" were going to happen. At the close of 1739 they had abundant reason to thank God, who had more than fulfilled their expectations.

CHAPTER II

THE TWO SCHISMS

(1740–1741)

Just after its birth the Revival of the eighteenth century had to pass through two internal conflicts, which threatened to paralyse its success, and even to endanger its very existence. Under an apparent unity there lay concealed, in fact, opposite tendencies and views in the leaders of the movement. These divergencies, at first kept under, finally burst out on two different sides, and produced a double schism among them. The Revival must indeed have been a much-needed answer to very great wants, it must have been quite a providential event, since it survived the two crises we are about to relate.

Both John Wesley and his friends were deeply indebted to the Moravians, who had introduced them to the vital doctrine of the Reformation. For a time they went on working along with them. But there existed between them such a difference of temperament that it must, sooner or later, show itself. The practical genius of John Wesley could not long conform to the mystic language and the Quietist sentimentality which prevailed in the Moravian circles of London; and that community was not inclined to approve the conquering spirit of the newly born Revival. Two very distinct types of piety and of theology, the German and the English, were

for a short period associated; but a permanent fellowship between them could not take place without mutual concessions, and these were not granted on either side.

The situation was difficult enough in itself, but it was made worse by the arrival in London, in October 1739, of a Moravian, who was a native of Alsace, Philip Henry Molther by name.[1] He was put at the head of the Moravian community in Fetter Lane, and soon saturated it with Antinomian teachings and Quietist principles which absolutely antagonised the evangelical doctrines of salvation. "They affirmed," says Wesley, "that we were all in a wrong way still; that we had no faith at all; that faith admits of no degrees, and consequently weak faith is no faith; that none is justified till he has a clean heart, and is incapable of any doubt or fear. They affirmed also, that there is no commandment in the New Testament, but 'to believe'; that no other duty lies upon us; and that when a man does believe, he is not bound or obliged to do anything which is commanded there: in particular, that he is not subject to ordinances, that is (as they explained it), is not bound or obliged to pray, to communicate, to read or hear the Scriptures; but may or may not use any of these things (being in no bondage) according as he finds his heart free to it. They further affirmed, that a believer cannot use any of these as a means of grace; that, indeed, there is no such thing as any means of grace, this expression having no foundation in Scripture; and that an unbeliever, or one who has not a clean heart, ought not to use them at all; ought not to pray, or search the Scriptures, or communicate, but to 'be still,' that is, leave off these 'works

[1] Molther had studied theology in the University of Jena. In 1737 he was chosen as tutor of the only son of Count Zinzendorf. When he came to England he was on his way to Pennsylvania, but he was called back to Germany in September 1740.

of the law'; and then he will surely receive faith, which, till he is 'still,' he cannot have."[1]

The teachings of Molther found great favour among the Moravians in London. His discourses, which at first were spoken in Latin and interpreted one sentence at a time, filled with hearers not only the meeting-room of Fetter Lane, but even the yard in front of it. His views, expressed in those mystic phrases of which Moravians make too much use,[2] soon gained ground among the members of the community, to which the Wesley brothers had become attached from the first, and of which they had been for two years the real ministers. The two brothers were more or less openly accused of ignoring yet the hidden treasures of the gospel mystery; and they had to see several of their spiritual children turn aside from them and from their teachings, to embrace the high-flown mystical theories propounded by Molther. Long discussions took place, in which Benjamin Ingham and Howell Harris interfered as peace-makers. Ingham, though himself a Moravian, told his London brethren that they were wandering from the right path. Twice John Wesley had to come from Bristol in order to bring back to concord his divided friends. In a series of discourses he refuted the erroneous ideas which Molther was spreading abroad. But this latter had taken Wesley's place in the hearts of the Fetter Lane community, and, on the 16th of July 1740, it was formally voted by a majority of the members, that henceforth John Wesley was not to speak in their meetings. Four days after he appeared in the midst of their assembly and read to the Moravians a statement, where he specified the errors against which he felt constrained to protest. The docu-

[1] *Journal*, 22nd June 1740.

[2] In a letter to John Wesley, dated January 25, Molther said: "I love you with a real love in the wounds of my Redeemer."

ment ended thus: "I believe these assertions to be flatly contrary to the Word of God. I have warned you hereof again and again, and besought you to turn back 'to the law and the testimony.' I have borne with you long, hoping you would turn. But, as I find you more and more confirmed in the error of your ways, nothing now remains but that I should give you up to God. You that are of the same judgment, follow me."[1]

Eighteen or nineteen persons rose silently and followed John Wesley. The day after, twenty-five men and fifty women met in the Foundery Chapel to form a distinct society under his guidance. "We gathered up our wreck," says Charles Wesley, "*rari nantes in gurgite vasto*, floating here and there on the vast abyss, for nine out of ten were swallowed up in the dead sea of stillness."

A few days later John Wesley wrote "to the Church of God at Hernhuth," in order to make known the motives that prompted him to sever his connection with Moravianism. But the separation was to be definitive, and neither Böhler nor Zinzendorf could restore union. The interview between the latter and John Wesley, in September 1741, ended in a theological discussion carried on with some warmth. On the subject of Christian perfection, the good count got so excited that he denounced that doctrine as "the error of errors," and declared, in exaggerated and rhetorical Latin, that he "fought it with sword and fire all over the world."[2] But Wesley remained very calm, and even tried to persuade Zinzendorf that they were fighting rather for words than for ideas.[3]

[1] *Journal*, 20th July 1740.

[2] "Nullam inhærentem perfectionem in hac vita agnosco. Est hic error errorum. Eum per totum orbem igne et gladio persequor, conculco, ad internecionem do. Christus est sola perfectio nostra. Qui perfectionem inhærentem sequitur, Christum denegat" (*Journal*, 3rd September 1741).

[3] Moore, *Life of Wesley*, vol. i. p. 481; Tyerman, vol. i. p. 339. John

We find moments in history when, because of some misunderstanding or of some seemingly unimportant difference, the best men separate and go each his own way. Must we, in every instance, regret it? We think not. The divisions of Christians are undoubtedly an evil in themselves, and a proof of that human frailty which remains even in the best. But is it not evident also that from this evil God has often worked out the greatest good for His Church? Would Methodism have accomplished so great a work in the world if it had been from the first merged in the Moravian body? For our part we regard it as a settled question, and are persuaded that each of these sections of the Church has had its special purpose, and has been called into existence to supply special necessities.

We must add here, that the errors of Quietism, which had been embraced by a portion of the Moravians in London, and which sorely disturbed their society, had only a temporary triumph. A few years after the crisis we have just described they were solemnly disavowed by those Christian brethren.

Whilst this first schism was taking place, another and still more important one was preparing for infant Methodism. Wesley and Whitefield had been brought in a similar way into the enjoyment of salvation, and had at first laboured together in perfect harmony. But, in their opinions on doctrinal points, a divergence soon made itself apparent, which widened until it terminated in division. This divergence of opinion had respect to

Wesley gives in his *Journal* a Latin text of his conversation with Zinzendorf, because they had to use the medium of Latin. It is there we find that Wesley at one time said to the count: "Pugnamus, opinor, de verbis." Such is also the impression that remains after reading the account of that interview, which was very far from bringing nearer one another these two men of God, otherwise so remarkably fit to understand each other.

the doctrines of predestination and election, which Whitefield accepted in the strict Calvinistic sense, like the Presbyterians of Scotland and the Independents of New England, with whom he was closely connected. John Wesley, on the contrary, had remained on that point faithful to the Arminian theology which had prevailed in the Anglican Church. Wesley's logical mind could not accept a doctrine which appeared to him to make God partial and unjust, and to have no real foundation in Holy Writ.

For some time the two friends agreed, for union's sake, to maintain strict silence on this disputed point. Unfortunately, their followers did not display the same moderation. As soon as Whitefield had left for America, some of his party kindled the flame of discord by engaging discussions on the subject among the people in London and Bristol. Wesley, who desired to allow complete liberty of opinion on this point to all the members of his societies, but was unwilling that they should become a theatre of strife, endeavoured to restore peace, beseeching the dissentients to refrain from vain disputes. When, however, he saw that they persisted in troubling the societies, and refused to waive questions of so divisive a nature, after taking counsel with the members as a body, he expelled the disputants.

The letters sent from America by Whitefield to his friend related mostly to that question. Here are parts of one he wrote on the 26th March 1740: "The doctrine of election, and the final perseverance of those who are truly in Christ, I am ten thousand times more convinced of, if possible, than when I saw you last. . . . You think otherwise. Why then should we dispute when there is no probability of convincing? Will it not, in the end, destroy brotherly love, and insensibly take from us that cordial union and sweetness of soul which

I pray God may always subsist between us? How glad would the enemies of the Lord be to see us divided! How many would rejoice should I join and make a party against you! How would the cause of our common Master every way suffer by our raising disputes about particular points of doctrine! Honoured sir, let us offer salvation freely to all by the blood of Jesus; and whatever light God has communicated to us, let us freely communicate it to others. I have lately read the life of Luther, and think it in no wise to his honour that the last part of his life was so much taken up in disputing with Zwinglius and others, who in all probability equally loved the Lord Jesus, notwithstanding they might differ from him in other points. Let this, dear sir, be a caution to us."[1]

In spite of Whitefield's earnest desire to maintain peace and union, a desire which he expressed so eloquently, he was induced, through the influence of his American friends, to exaggerate the importance of those points which he at first seemed to consider as only secondary ones. In August of the same year he wrote to John Wesley as follows: "Perhaps the doctrines of election and final perseverance have been abused; but, notwithstanding, they are children's bread, and ought not to be withheld from them. . . . I never read anything that Calvin wrote. My doctrines I had from Christ and his apostles."[2]

In the meanwhile John Wesley, in obedience to what he considered a divine impulse, published at Bristol his celebrated sermon on Free Grace, perhaps the most moving and eloquent of all that he has written. In it he says: "Though you use softer words than some, you mean the self-same thing, and God's decree concerning the election of grace, according to your account of it,

[1] Tyerman, *Life of Whitefield*, vol. i. p. 366. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 404.

amounts to neither more nor less than what others call 'God's decree of reprobation.' Call it therefore by whatever name you please, 'election, preterition, predestination, or reprobation,' it comes in the end to the same thing. The sense of all is plainly this,—by virtue of an eternal, unchangeable, irresistible decree of God, one part of mankind are infallibly saved, and the rest infallibly damned; it being impossible that any of the former should be damned, or that any of the latter should be saved."

This sharp protest against the doctrine of the decrees annoyed Whitefield, who sent Wesley a letter in which he charged him with having drawn lots to decide whether or not he would write on that question, and with letting loose the spirit of strife all over the land. That private letter fell, nobody knows how, into the hands of some unscrupulous persons, who printed it at once, and on a Sunday morning distributed copies of it at the door of the Foundery Chapel where Wesley was going to preach. Wesley, having received a copy, stood up in the pulpit to explain the unfair manner in which the letter had been printed, and then added: "I will do just what I believe Mr. Whitefield would were he here himself," and "tore it in pieces before them all." All present followed his example, and destroyed the copies they had received at the door. That happened on the 2nd February 1741.

As to Whitefield, he seems to have hesitated at first whether he would make a public answer to the sermon on Free Grace. He wrote to Wesley on the 9th of November 1740: "I am willing to go with you to prison and to death, but I am not willing to oppose you."[1] And on the 24th of November: "My dear brother, for Christ's sake avoid all disputation. Do not oblige me to preach against you; I had rather die."[2]

But, a month later, he had altered his mind, and he

[1] Tyerman, *Life of Whitefield*, vol. i. p. 436. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 440.

penned "A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, in answer to his Sermon entitled 'Free Grace.' Bethesda, in Georgia, December 24, 1740." It bore the following epigraph: "When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." In this letter, which was to be published, Whitefield assailed John Wesley with a good deal of personal feeling and acrimony. As to the character of the doctrines he advocated, it will suffice to quote the following passage of his "Answer." "I frankly acknowledge, I believe the doctrine of reprobation, in this view, that God intends to give His saving grace, through Jesus Christ, only to a certain number, and that the rest of mankind, after the fall of Adam, being justly left of God to continue in sin, will at last suffer that eternal death which is its proper wages."

Three weeks after he had prepared that letter Whitefield embarked for England, bringing with him the manuscript. On arriving in London, in March 1741, "he submitted it to Charles Wesley, who returned it to the author endorsed with the words, "Put up again thy sword into its place." The pamphlet, however, was published. Wesley said in his reply: "You rank all the maintainers of *universal redemption* with Socinians. Alas, my brother! do you not know even this, that Socinians allow no redemption at all? that Socinus himself speaks thus, *Tota redemptio nostra per Christum metaphora*?[1] How easy were it for me to hit many palpable blots in what you call an answer to my sermon! And how, above measure, contemptible would you then appear to all impartial men, either of sense or learning! But, I assure you, my hand shall not be upon you. The Lord be judge between me and thee. The general tenour, both of my public and private

[1] "All our redemption through Christ is a metaphor."

exhortations, when I touch thereon at all, as even my enemies know it, if they would testify, is, 'Spare the young man, even Absalom, for my sake.'"[1]

Meanwhile the breach was widening between the adherents of those two theological tendencies in Methodism. Cennick, the Kingswood schoolmaster, was at the head of the advocates of predestination in that place. Soon it became impossible for the two parties there to live together, and there was a separation. Cennick was followed by about fifty of the members, whilst a hundred or more stuck to Wesley. Then Whitefield, acting under the influence of his surroundings, told Wesley "they preached two different gospels; and therefore he not only would not join with him, or give him the right hand of fellowship, but was resolved publicly to preach against him and his brother."

Whitefield's adherents in London built for him, at a short distance from the Foundery, a wooden chapel, which they named the Tabernacle. There was still on both sides a polemical violence which is to be regretted; but certainly John Wesley bore the palm for moderation in his words and deeds: his temper was naturally cooler and calmer than that of the lively Whitefield. The latter, however, atoned for the sharpness of his attacks by the promptness with which he acknowledged he had gone too far, and by the kindness of heart he always manifested. As to Wesley, he invariably refused to publish anything that would seem directed against his old friend. One of his friends wished him to reply to Whitefield's pamphlet. Wesley answered: "You may read Whitefield against Wesley, but you shall never read Wesley against Whitefield."[2]

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xii. p. 148.
[2] Reynolds, *Anecdotes of Wesley*.

In vain did several friends of the Methodist Revival endeavour to prevent the disruption that was taking place. But we must neither wonder at it nor mourn over it. The two tendencies could not dwell together in unity, and, as Isaac Taylor says, "Such congregations would have been kept in the pitiable condition of a ship thrown on its beam ends, larboard and starboard, by hurricanes driving alternately east and west."[1] A merely factitious unity would have probably entailed intestine strifes, without dignity and without issue; whereas in its two sections, organised as two distinct armies under the same banner, Methodism could more freely pursue its great task of reformation.

The Calvinistic branch of Methodism, the history of which we do not purpose to retrace, founded only a few churches, and spread so far through the ardent zeal and the liberality of Lady Huntingdon, and the labours of Howell Harris, rather than through the influence of Whitefield. The latter was, as a preacher, more remarkably gifted than John Wesley, and he remains, no doubt, one of the most brilliant types of Christian oratory. But he was wholly deficient as to the organising genius and directing power which so pre-eminently marked Wesley's work, and gave it its solid and lasting character. Whitefield, indeed, has founded nothing; but his mighty preaching quickened the Non-conformist Churches in Great Britain and in America, whilst his *quondam* fellow-worker, who had remained a Churchman at heart, exercised but little influence among them. And in this fact lies the true justification of a schism which several of those who lived at that time apprehended would be fatal to the Revival itself.

The Calvinistic branch of Methodism had the honour of supplying the first martyr who died for the cause of

[1] Isaac Taylor, *Wesley and Methodism*, p. 44.

the Revival. William Seward had accompanied Whitefield in his second voyage to America. In a missionary furlough he undertook in Wales with Howell Harris, they were assailed by severe persecution. At Caerleon, missiles of every kind were showered upon them. Seward lost one eye in that affair, but at Hay he received a blow on the head which proved fatal. On the 22nd of October 1741 he died from the wound that had been inflicted; he was then only thirty-eight years old.

Wesley and Whitefield soon became reconciled. Without, of course, abdicating their private views, they suffered the past to be buried in oblivion: they exchanged friendly offices, and even occupied each other's pulpits. Their friendship rested on too solid a foundation to be permanently broken by secondary disagreements, and their hearts were too Christian not to realise the perfect accord existing between them on the essential verities of religion.

CHAPTER III

THE PROGRESS OF THE REVIVAL

(1740–1741)

THESE two years, in the course of which the interests of the Revival, still in its infancy, came so near being imperilled on account of the two schisms we have related, had not, however, been fruitless in regard to the work of evangelisation. From London and Bristol, which were his two centres, Wesley radiated to the neighbouring districts, and continued those open-air services which brought him into contact with the masses. His name awoke everywhere a lively curiosity, and as soon as it was rumoured that he had arrived in a place mechanics and labourers would crowd to hear him.

He did not at all times, indeed, meet with a cordial welcome; it often happened that he was received the first time with open arms, but the second time with showers of stones. A few facts borrowed from his *Journal* will show how he fared with the multitudes.

At Bristol, in the early part of the year 1740, many attempts were made by the rabble to break up the meetings. One evening they filled the space round the chapel and the street itself, and behaved as though they would sack everything. The magistrates had to interfere and arrest the ringleaders, who were taken into

custody. This firmness on the part of the authorities for a long time prevented such outbreaks.[1]

The London populace were less easy to master, their habits of insubordination rendering them truly formidable. One day, on alighting from his carriage, John Wesley found the door of his chapel beset by a clamorous mob which seemed bent on evil. So far from being disconcerted, he made no attempt to force a passage, but, thanking God for such an opportunity, at once began to preach to the multitude in the street, "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." By degrees the clamour subsided, and when he took leave of his hearers they dismissed him "with many blessings."[2] Two days after this a furious multitude took possession of the chapel, drowning the voice of the preacher with their cries. But he, always calm, let the storm expend its strength, and thus gained the ascendency; the scene presently changed, tears flowed, and the lions became lambs. In reference to this scene, Wesley wrote in his *Journal*: "I wonder the devil has not wisdom enough to discern that he is destroying his own kingdom. I believe he has never yet, any one time, caused this open opposition to the truth of God without losing one or more of his servants, who were found of God, while they sought Him not."[3]

Shortly after he writes: "When I came home I found an innumerable mob round the door, who opened all their throats the moment they saw me. I desired my friends to go into the house, and then, walking into the midst of the people, proclaimed 'the name of the Lord, gracious and merciful, and repenting Him of the evil.' They stood staring one at another. I told them they could not flee from the face of this great God; and

[1] *Journal*, 1st April 1740. [2] *Ibid.*, 14th September 1740.
[3] *Ibid.*, 16th September 1740.

therefore besought them, that we might all join together in crying to Him for mercy. To this they readily agreed: I then commended them to His grace, and went undisturbed to the little company within."[1]

Wesley's ministrations were not only thus disturbed by the excitement of the mob, but frequently also by interruptions of all kinds. On one occasion, at Bristol, a man cried out in the midst of the meeting: "Thou art a hypocrite, a devil, an enemy to the Church. This is false doctrine. It is not the doctrine of the Church. It is damnable doctrine. It is the doctrine of devils." Wesley continued his sermon, undisturbed by the outcries of this reviler, who proved to be a Romish priest in disguise.[2]

At Nottingham, while he was preaching in the market-place, a man came behind and began to interrupt him, uttering contradictions and blasphemy. Wesley turned and looked at him, and the man stepped behind a pillar and soon disappeared.[3]

But he had more formidable adversaries than these noisy fellows, whom he knew how to manage; the clergy constantly treated him as a deserter and an apostate, and reproached him with compromising the dignity of his order, and degrading the robe he wore. They were about to wage an open war against him, but for the present they contented themselves with refusing him the use of their pulpits. In the course of a whole year he preached only two or three times in Anglican churches.

But Wesley was something more than an evangelist: he was a true pastor besides. Notwithstanding his incessant journeyings, he found time to visit the newly converted, that he might encourage them to maintain

[1] *Journal*, 28th September 1740. [2] *Ibid.*, 14th April 1740.
[3] *Ibid.*, 14th June 1741.

their steadfastness. The sick received assiduous attention, and a large number accepted joyfully his message of salvation. Nor did he forget the prisoners, the class upon whom he had bestowed his first labours in Oxford. He was at Bristol, in January 1740, when he received from a young man, who was lying in a London prison under sentence of death, a message to the following effect: "I adjure you by the living God, that you come and see me before I go hence." This young man, Snowde by name, had been for some time in Wesley's house, who thus saved him from starvation, but was rewarded by Snowde stealing from him thirty pounds sterling, which were intended for the building of a school. Some time after, the young man was, for some other misdeeds, arrested in London and condemned to be hanged. On receiving his message, Wesley could not hesitate; notwithstanding the three days' journey that lay between him and London, he immediately set out. He found the prisoner in a penitent state of mind, and he strove to lead him to Christ, until the poor wretch could say, "I trust God has forgiven me this and all my sins, washing them away in the blood of the Lamb." Shortly after the young man was reprieved, and ultimately his sentence was commuted into transportation for life.[1]

In the Bristol prisons, which Wesley often visited, he was favoured with like success. Among others, a poor soldier who was about to be executed was converted through his means. Other condemned felons desired his services, but a certain alderman of the name of Beecher opposed their request, and refused him admission into the prison. Wesley mentions this in his *Journal*, and adds: "I cite Alderman Beecher to answer for these souls at the judgment-seat of Christ."[2]

[1] *Journal*, 31st January 1740. [2] *Ibid.*, 2nd April 1740.

Meanwhile the work of the Revival was proceeding more calmly than in the beginning, but was acquiring a deeper action. "It was easy to observe here," says Wesley of his Bristol societies in March 1740, "in how different a manner God works now from what He did last spring. He then poured along like a rapid flood, overwhelming all before Him. Whereas now,

> He deigns his influence to infuse,
> Secret, refreshing as the silent dews.

Convictions sink deeper and deeper. Love and joy are more calm, even and steady. And God, in many, is laying the axe to the root of the tree, who can have no rest in their spirits till they are fully renewed in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness."[1]

Religious life, indeed, was abundant in the societies, and their members were bearing the fruits of first love, joy and holiness. Piety taught them how to live well and how to die well. At a much later period Wesley said, "Our people die well"; but in earlier days he might have said the same. Elizabeth Davis, "being speechless" on her deathbed, "held up both her hands" to show her friends "she was going to God." Another member of the London society told him: "I am very ill, but I am very well. Oh, I am happy, happy, happy!" Jane Muncy, the day before she died, said to Wesley: "I faint not; I murmur not; I rejoice ever more; I give thanks in everything, . . . I have nothing to desire. God is ever near me, and I have nothing to do but to praise Him." Hannah Richardson, whose funeral was attended by all the members of the societies in Bristol, and also by the rabble hooting and showering missiles, said, before she expired: "I have no fear, no doubt, no trouble. Heaven is open! I see Jesus Christ with all

[1] *Journal*, 5th March 1740.

His angels and saints in white. I see what I cannot utter or express."[1] Others died singing hymns, as a sign of the joy which filled their hearts.

In separating from the Moravians, Wesley had been careful to retain from their organisation the use of band meetings and love-feasts, which were now in great favour both at Bristol and London. Wesley maintained a vigorous discipline among the "United Societies," as he now called them, excluding those members whose conduct was not consistent, and endeavouring at the same time to preserve unity and peace. The societies had soon recovered from the losses they had sustained, since, in the month of September 1741, they contained about a thousand members in London alone. These were almost wholly gathered from the lower classes. Nevertheless, Wesley endeavoured to train them to make sacrifices for the sustentation of various branches of Christian work. The winter of 1740 being extraordinarily severe, he appealed to his Bristol friends on behalf of the poor, who wanted bread, and with the money thus collected was enabled to feed a hundred, and sometimes a hundred and fifty, a day, of those who needed it most, while the frost lasted. In London he instituted a kind of order of deacons, consisting of twelve persons, whose business it was to afford relief to the most necessitous cases. Each of these persons had a certain district under his care, in which he visited the poor and relieved them or procured them employment, besides paying special attention to the sick. Once a week they were to meet in order to give an account of what they had done, and consult what to do for the future. The necessary means were furnished by each member of society subscribing a penny a week, and contributing also any garments they might be able to spare. Besides

[1] Tyerman, vol. i. p. 355.

the poor-fund, there were other claims upon the new societies which demanded further sacrifices. They already possessed property in chapels and schools, the debts on which needed to be paid off as soon as possible. The schools required considerable assistance, and the time was coming when the flocks would be called upon to support their own preachers.

The question of the administration of sacraments soon became pressing in the new communities, both in Bristol and London. The Wesley brothers were so much attached to tradition that they felt rather unwilling to celebrate the Lord's Supper elsewhere than in churches, but necessity overcame their scruples. It was Charles, the more Anglican of the two, who administered it first, in the schoolroom of Kingswood, to the members of societies whom the clergymen had refused to admit to the Lord's Table, as we said before. He even declared that, had they not been able to use that room, he would without hesitation have celebrated the Holy Communion in the neighbouring forest.

In London some of the members partook of the Lord's Supper in their parish church; but when the Methodists became unanimous in asking that their own pastor should administer the ordinance to them, John Wesley, in the course of the autumn of the year 1741, decided to borrow the small French Protestant church in Hermitage Street, of which the minister, Mr. Deleznot, granted him the use; and there, for five successive Sundays, he administered the Lord's Supper to two hundred different communicants at each service.

About the same time Wesley began giving regularly to every member a ticket, somewhat corresponding to the *méreaux* they used in the Reformed Church of France. Upon each ticket was written the name of the recipient, with the signature of the preacher who

gave it; the ticket also bore, in that early period, some symbolic engraving, such as the angel flying "in the midst of heaven," the dove, the lamb, the phœnix rising again from its own ashes, the anchor of hope, etc. Later, these engravings were replaced by a text from the Bible.

Wesley considered these tickets as very important. "Those who bore these tickets," said he, "(these *συμβολα* or *tesseræ*, as the ancients termed them, being of just the same force with the *επιστολαι συστατικαι*, *commendatory letters*, mentioned by the apostle), wherever they came, were acknowledged by their brethren, and received with all cheerfulness. These were likewise of use in other respects. By these it was easily distinguished, when the society were to meet apart, who were members of it and who not. These also supplied us with a quiet and inoffensive method of removing any disorderly member. He has no new ticket at the quarterly visitation; (for so often the tickets are changed;) and hereby it is immediately known that he is no longer of the community."[1]

Thus grew, little by little, under the impulse of circumstances, a complete body of institutions which were bound together by the powerful genius of John Wesley.

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. viii. p. 257.

CHAPTER IV

LAY-PREACHING—WESLEY IN THE NORTH

(1742)

As the missionary work, entrusted by Divine Providence to Wesley and his friends, began to increase, their minds were perplexed by a difficult problem. How could they, being so few workers, provide for wants that were increasing every day? How were those souls which had been awakened to be gathered and watched over? How was the Revival to be introduced where it had not yet reached? Men were wanted for these purposes, and they were not forthcoming. Wesley hoped, at first, to find numerous auxiliaries among the Anglican clergy, but in this he was disappointed: here and there some timid sympathy was manifested, but the mass of the clergy were decidedly hostile to the movement.

There was only one way of escape from this embarrassing situation. It was that of grafting on the almost withered stock of the official ministry a lay order born from the Revival, and consequently able to understand its nature and to help in its propagation. The idea was so daring that at first it seemed impracticable. Notwithstanding, it was the only possible solution of this difficult question. Wesley was led to adopt it, as he did in many other things, by degrees and almost against

his will. Events, or rather Providence itself, which controls events, overruled his choice.

We have seen how Wesley had entrusted the care of his societies in London, Bristol, and Kingswood to intelligent laymen, whose business it was in his absence to instruct them by reading the Scriptures and adding a few reflections. He did not permit them to preach, as this would have been, according to the opinions he had held hitherto, an encroachment upon the rights of the clergy. The limits he assigned them were not so well defined, however, as to render the observance of them easy or even at all times practicable. One of these assistants, Thomas Maxfield, was so carried out of himself by his devoted zeal that he soon overpassed those limits, and preached in London at the society meetings with very great success.[1] As soon as Wesley heard of it he hastened back from Bristol to put a stop to what he considered a grave disorder.

Happily, his mother was there, and once more her counsel was of the greatest value. She now resided in the house at the Foundery, and she watched the progress of her sons in their work with unfaltering sympathy.

On his arrival she perceived that Wesley's countenance expressed dissatisfaction and anxiety, and asked the cause. "Thomas Maxfield has turned preacher, I find," he said, with unusual abruptness. "John," she replied, "you know what my sentiments have been. You cannot suspect me of favouring readily anything of this

[1] Thomas Maxfield had been one of the first converts in Bristol. For a time he accompanied Charles Wesley, most likely as his servant. He was remarkably gifted, and the Countess of Huntingdon said of him: "Maxfield is one of the greatest instances of God's peculiar favour that I know. He is my astonishment. The first time I made him expound, I expected little from him; but before he had gone over one fifth part of his discourse my attention was riveted, and I was immovable. His power in prayer, also, is very extraordinary."

kind. But take care what you do with respect to that young man; for he is as surely called of God to preach as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him also yourself." Wesley felt the reasonableness of this advice, and when he had heard Maxfield preach he said, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good." He saw in this a providential indication; and in such a case his objections always fell to the ground. The lay ministry was now established, and the result proved that this institution met the exigencies of the time. This new agency soon attained large proportions. The societies were in want of leaders who could watch over them and extend the work of evangelisation. These men, raised up in their midst and accepted by Wesley, were pious and simple-hearted laymen who, without renouncing their worldly avocations, devoted all their leisure to the preaching of the gospel. At the close of this year Wesley had twenty such labourers under his direction.

The introduction of this novel practice was one of the things that brought upon Wesley the harshest blame from those who put ecclesiastical formalism above every other consideration. They never forgave him for having authorised men to preach who had not been ordained by a bishop. But we had better listen to what Wesley says of his own views on the subject, after he had been fully enlightened by experience. "I am bold to affirm that these unlettered men have help from God for that great work, the saving souls from death. . . . Indeed, in the one thing which they profess to know, they are not ignorant men. I trust there is not one of them who is not able to go through such an examination, in substantial, practical, experimental divinity, as few of our candidates for holy orders, even in the university (I speak it with sorrow and shame, and in tender love),

are able to do. . . . 'But they are laymen.' . . . The scribes of old, who were the ordinary preachers among the Jews, were not priests; they were not better than laymen. Yea, many of them were incapable of the priesthood, being of the tribe of Simeon, not of Levi. Hence, probably, it was that the Jews themselves never urged it as an objection to our Lord's preaching, . . . that He was no priest after the order of Aaron, nor, indeed, could be, seeing He was of the tribe of Judah. Nor does it appear that any objected this to the apostles. . . . If we come to later times: Was Mr. Calvin ordained? Was he either priest or deacon? And were not most of those whom it pleased God to employ in promoting the Reformation abroad, laymen also? Could that great work have been promoted at all in many places if laymen had not preached? . . . In all Protestant Churches it is still more evident that ordination is not held a necessary pre-requisite of preaching; for in Sweden, in Germany, in Holland, and, I believe, in every Reformed Church in Europe, it is not only permitted but required, that before any one is ordained . . . he should publicly preach a year or more *ad probandum facultatem.* And for this practice they believe they have the authority of an express command of God: 'Let these first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless' (1 Tim. iii. 10)."[1]

When Wesley wrote these lines, the lay ministry had already been in existence several years, and had justified its creation. He had dropped the last vestige of ecclesiastical prejudice after seeing the marvellous work God did through those humble instruments.[2]

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. viii. pp. 220–222.

[2] Some years later Charles Wesley met at Hotwells, near Bristol, the Archbishop of Armagh, who spoke to him very highly of his brother John;

Among the first preachers that God raised up to assist Wesley was John Nelson, a plain Yorkshire mason, who, while labouring in his earthly calling in London, had been converted in a remarkable manner under Wesley's preaching. Returning to his native county, he was constrained to make known to his neighbours the great change that had been wrought in him, and began at once to preach the gospel to them. His simple and warm-hearted preaching, and his exemplary piety, produced an immense effect in his native town, and he had the joy of bringing many souls to Jesus. He wrote to Wesley to ask his advice, who replied that he would visit him shortly.[1] Wesley, about the same time, received a pressing message from the pious Countess of Huntingdon, who tried to inspire him with concern for the miserable state in which the colliers of Newcastle, and of the Tyne country generally were living.[2] It was in answer to these calls that he started for the north in May 1742.

but he found one thing to blame in him, namely, that he used laymen as preachers.

[1] John Nelson was one of the most remarkable characters among Wesley's helpers. His *Memoirs* are most interesting; in fact, quite worthy of being compared with those of Bunyan.

[2] Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, born 24th August 1707, was one of three daughters of the Earl of Ferrers. She was married in 1728 to the Earl of Huntingdon; she lost her husband in 1746, after losing several of her children. These trials had the effect of turning her mind to religious subjects. She embraced heartily the principles of Methodism, and dedicated her life to their furtherance. She was chiefly attached to Whitefield, whose theological views she favoured. She appointed him as her chaplain, and used to invite the greatest people in England to come and listen to him; among them, Chesterfield, Bolingbroke, Horace Walpole, Hume, the Duchess of Marlborough. She employed her great fortune in founding a college for preparing ministers, situated at Trevecca (spelt by Wesley, Trevecka) in Wales, in building chapels and in providing for the salary of preachers. At her death, in 1791, there were sixty-four chapels comprised in what was called "Lady Huntingdon's Connexion." More or less those churches have been absorbed since by

This was his first missionary journey into the northern counties, and there were magnificent successes in store for him in that part of the country. He set out from London on horseback, and first went to visit the countess, who was already a devoted friend and a zealous promoter of the Revival.[1] After spending three days with her, he started for Birstal, the town in which John Nelson lived. On his way he met with an adventure which is amusing enough, and shows what prejudices were entertained against him at that time. "I overtook," he says, "a serious man, with whom I immediately fell into conversation. He presently gave me to know what his opinions were; therefore I said nothing to contradict them. But that did not content him; he was quite uneasy to know whether I held the doctrine of the decrees as he did, but I told him over and over, 'We had better keep to practical things, lest we should be angry at one another.' And so we did for two miles, till he caught me unawares and dragged me into the dispute before I knew where I was. He then grew warmer and warmer, told me I was rotten at heart, and supposed I was one of John Wesley's followers. I told him, 'No, I am John Wesley himself.' Upon which—

'*Improvisum aspris veluti qui sentibus anguem Pressit*,'[2] . . .

he would gladly have run away outright. But, being the better mounted of the two, I kept close to his side, and endeavoured to show him his heart till we came into the street of Northampton."[3]

Congregationalism, and the college has been transferred from Trevecca to Cheshunt, in Herts, where it has prospered. The census of 1851 reported one hundred and nine chapels as belonging to the denomination which has been called after the illustrious countess.

[1] Tyerman, vol. i. pp. 382, 383.

[2] Virgil, *Æneid*, ii. 379. "As one that has unawares trodden upon a snake."

[3] *Journal*, 21st May 1742.

At Birstal, Wesley was agreeably surprised to meet with a small society and an excellent preacher. Whatever doubts he may have had on the subject of lay-preaching, they must have been completely dissipated by the sight of what Nelson had accomplished. After having preached in the open air to a large gathering, and made a thorough acquaintance with the little Birstal society, Wesley continued his journey northward, leaving to Nelson the direction of the work he had begun. He was accompanied by John Taylor, a friend of Lady Huntingdon.

On the 28th of May he arrived at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, a town of considerable size, and the centre of one of the richest coal districts in England. It was also a sink of corruption and misery. The same evening Wesley walked through the town, and remarked that he had never in so short a space of time seen and heard "so much drunkenness, cursing, and swearing, even from the mouths of little children. Surely," said he to himself, "this place is ripe for Him who 'came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'" He sought in vain for any seriously disposed person. But he was not the man to retreat, and determined to begin his work without delay.[1]

The following (Sunday) morning, at seven o'clock, he says: "I walked down to Sandgate, the poorest and most contemptible part of the town; and, standing at the end of the street with John Taylor, began to sing the 100th Psalm. Three or four people came out to see what was the matter, who soon increased to four or five hundred. I suppose there might be twelve or fifteen hundred before I had done preaching; to whom I applied those solemn words, 'He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the

[1] *Journal*, 28th May 1742.

chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and by His stripes we are healed.' Observing the people, when I had done, to stand gaping and staring upon me with the most profound astonishment, I told them, 'If you desire to know who I am, my name is John Wesley. At five in the evening, with God's help, I design to preach here again.'" At the hour appointed the whole of the labouring population assembled in a body to hear him. Never, even in Bristol or London, had Wesley addressed such a multitude. Ranged on the side of a hill, it formed a vast pyramid. The preacher stood at the summit, where he could be seen of all, though it was not possible for one half of them to hear his words distinctly. He again proclaimed the infinite mercy of God, and his powerful utterances smote many a conscience. When he had finished he could scarcely make his way to his lodgings for the press; he was beset on all sides, every one being so anxious to see him and speak to him that he was almost trodden under foot by the crowd. His return to the inn was like a triumph. He found the place surrounded by people who had come to beg him to spend a few more days with them; but his engagements were already fixed, and he could not comply with their request.[1]

Soon after, Charles Wesley visited Newcastle, and continued the work so auspiciously commenced by his brother. John himself returned before the end of the year, and devoted six weeks to the work of evangelisation in this and the neighbouring towns. Nowhere had he met with so cordial a reception: the eagerness with which the people listened to the preaching of the gospel filled him with joy. What formed a subject of still greater joy was the numerous and remarkable conversions that attended his labours: some of them were

[1] *Journal*, 31st May 1742.

accompanied by physical manifestations similar to those he had witnessed in the southern counties. Generally, however, the work assumed a more internal and deeper character. "I never saw a work of God," says he, "in any other place so evenly and gradually carried on. It continually rises, step by step. Not so much seems to be done at any one time as hath frequently been at Bristol or London; but something at every time. It is the same with particular souls. I saw none in that triumph of faith which has been so common in other places. But the believers go on calm and steady. Let God do as seemeth Him good."[1] At the end of the year there was in Newcastle a Methodist society numbering eight hundred souls.

Before leaving Newcastle, Wesley bought a piece of land and commenced the erection of a chapel, with an asylum for destitute children. This undertaking also was a work of faith. "It being computed that such a house as was proposed could not be finished under seven hundred pounds, many were positive it would never be finished at all; others, that I should not live to see it covered. I was of another mind: nothing doubting but, as it was begun for God's sake, He would provide what was needful for the finishing it."[2]

Returning from the north, he preached in the towns that lay on his route, and took this opportunity of visiting Epworth, his native place. Here, in his father's own parish, the pulpit was refused to him by his father's successor, who also proceeded to the length of preaching openly against him. At the close of the sermon, Wesley, who was not to be daunted by opposition, caused it to be announced that he would preach in the churchyard. He accordingly did so, taking

[1] *Journal*, 25th November 1742.
[2] *Journal*, 5th June 1742.



JOHN WESLEY.

(Painted by John M. Williams.)

his stand on his father's tombstone, and addressing thence a large and sympathising audience.[1] Every day for a week he preached on the same spot, which was to him so full of interest, and his words produced a profound impression on the minds of the people. Several persons were awakened to a serious seeking of the blessings of salvation. Even infidels were moved by his powerful appeals. One man who passed for a freethinker, and who boasted that for thirty years he had never entered a church, came out of curiosity to hear him. Seeing him stand, after the service, motionless as a statue, and evidently absorbed in thought, John Wesley went up to him and asked him abruptly, "Sir, are you a sinner?" He replied with a deep and broken voice, "Sinner enough," and continued staring upwards till his wife and a servant put him into his chaise and carried him home.[2] Ten years later, Wesley saw him again, and learned from his own lips that from that time he had become a changed man, and that he was now rejoicing in God.

During his stay at Epworth, Wesley waited upon a justice of the peace, an excellent man in all respects, to whom the populace had brought once "a whole waggon load of these new heretics," in order that he might deal with them according to their deserts. The magistrate with the utmost gravity asked what had been their crime. At this there was a deep silence, for this was a point the people had forgotten to settle. At length one said: "Why, they pretend to be better than other people; and besides, they pray from morning to night." "But," asked the magistrate, "have they done nothing besides?" "Yes, sir," said an old man, "an't please your worship, they have *convarted* my wife. Till she went among them, she had such a tongue! And

[1] *Journal*, 6th June 1742. [2] *Ibid.*, 12th June 1742.

now she is as quiet as a lamb." "Carry them back, carry them back," replied the justice, "and let them convert all the scolds in the town."[1]

This curious anecdote shows that at Epworth, as at Birstal, the Revival had begun before Wesley came. Benjamin Ingham, who had now fully identified himself with the Moravians, had established a few societies in those parts, especially in Yorkshire; but the Quietist doctrines had made their appearance there, as in London, and Christians had become divided.

Wesley had scarcely returned from his journey when he was called to the deathbed of his mother. "I found my mother on the borders of eternity. But she had no doubt or fear, nor any desire but (as soon as God should call) 'to depart and to be with Christ.'" The 23rd of July was her last day. In the morning she had said: "My dear Saviour! art Thou come to help me at my last extremity?" In the afternoon, when her son John came back from the prayer-meeting, he found the last struggle was beginning. He read to her the prayer for the dying, and soon after that godly woman fell asleep in the Lord. Before she died she had said to them, "Children, as soon as I am released, sing a psalm of praise to God." They fulfilled her request, and a song of praise, interrupted by the sobs of the mourners, was heard in the chamber from which the spirit of Susannah Wesley had just escaped to the skies. So serene a death, crowning a life so useful, taught Wesley lessons as valuable as any he had ever received from his mother.

That same year, which saw Methodism gaining a footing in the north, and recognising the lay-helpers, was also marked by another step in the organisation of the societies. They had existed since 1739; but it was only in 1742 that class-meetings, properly so called,

[1] *Journal*, 9th June 1742.

were established, and their regular organisation was due to something that seemed quite foreign to their primitive destination. A heavy debt was still weighing on the Bristol chapel. On the 15th February the chief members of the society met to consult about the best means to remove it. This is how Wesley relates what happened. "I was talking with several of the society in Bristol concerning the means of paying the debts there, when one stood up and said: 'Let every member of the society give a penny a week till all are paid.' Another answered: 'But many of them are poor, and cannot afford to do it.' 'Then,' said he, 'put eleven of the poorest with me: and if they can give anything, well; I will call on them weekly; and if they can give nothing, I will give for them as well as for myself. And each of you call on eleven of your neighbours weekly; receive what they give, and make up what is wanting.' It was done. In a while, some of these informed me, they found such and such an one did not live as he ought. It struck me immediately, 'this is the thing, the very thing we have wanted so long.'" [1]

From that time John Wesley used to meet his collectors, who, besides their financial task, had also the care of attending to the spiritual state of the members of their class, and to report to the pastor whatever of interest transpired in the societies. A few weeks later "the same method was used in London,[2] and there also it led to the consolidation of the work. "This was the origin of our classes," says Wesley; "for which I can never sufficiently praise God, the unspeakable usefulness of the institution having ever since become more and more manifest." [3]

[1] *Works*, vol. viii. p. 252. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 253.
[3] *Journal*, 25th April 1742.

At first the class-leaders were expected to visit their members at home. But that arrangement was not practicable, as it required from them the sacrifice of much more time than they could afford to give. For this reason the visits were soon replaced by a weekly meeting of the members, when they conversed on spiritual things, and each of them related his experience.

By thus dividing the societies into small companies, each with a responsible head, Wesley ensured both an effective pastoral oversight and a real discipline of the flock. Once every quarter the classes were visited, the spiritual condition of each member was inquired into, and a ticket of membership given as a token of faithfulness.

Methodism had now four principal centres: Bristol, Kingswood, London, and Newcastle. It also possessed several societies partly organised in the counties of Somerset, Wilts, Gloucester, Leicester, Warwick, and Nottingham, and in the south of Yorkshire.[1]

[1] *Works*, vol. xiii. p. 311.

CHAPTER V

CONFLICTS AND PERSECUTIONS IN STAFFORDSHIRE AND CORNWALL

(1743–1744)

In the year 1743 Wesley spent fourteen weeks in London, ten in Bristol and the neighbourhood, thirteen in the country round Newcastle, three in Cornwall, and twelve in travelling, mostly in the north of England. In 1744 about six months were given to the metropolis, half a dozen visits were paid to Bristol, and three months employed in going through Cornwall, Yorkshire, and Northumberland.

This plain summary of Wesley's work in those two years suffices to show that he was a missionary to the full extent of the word: he stayed, now a few days, now only some hours, in each place, continually travelling across England, from south to north and from east to west, undeterred by foul weather or by weariness, moved by the sole ambition of saving as many souls as possible, and, in order to obtain that result, redeeming every moment of time.

The daily life which Wesley thus embraced was hard indeed. England had no high-roads at that time, except in the vicinity of the cities, and the thoroughfares were sadly neglected. Wesley travelled on horseback, and, whilst riding, improved his leisure

in reading some literary, philosophical, or theological book; or else he would converse with one of his preachers whom he had taken as a companion for the journey. This course of incessant travels could not fail to be attended with adventures of all kinds. Not unfrequently he fell from his horse, but such accidents could not cure him of the dangerous habit of reading on horseback.[1] In July 1743, as he arrived in Darlington, his horse and that of his companion both fell ill and died suddenly. He had to hire one for a part of the remaining journey, and to walk from Boroughbridge to Leeds.[2]

In October of the same year, after leaving Epworth, Wesley had to cross the Trent in a ferry-boat during a violent storm. The boat, laden with eight people and three horses, began to fill with water, and both beasts and men rolled one over another. Happily, the horses leaped overboard, and thus lightened the boat, so that they "all came unhurt to land."[3]

The travelling missionary let no opportunity escape of spreading the gospel. He improved the meeting with people on the roads or in the inns, and spoke at once of the necessity of salvation; often he gave a tract to those with whom he had talked as a memento of their conversation. Generally such efforts met with a favourable reception, but at other times he had to bear a perfect volley of abuse. However, insults could not frighten or discourage a man who had learned to go through far more formidable assaults.

Early in the year 1743, on his way back to the south, Wesley again stopped at Epworth, his native place, and preached as before from his father's tomb. The Sunday he spent there being the Sacramental Sunday,

[1] *Journal*, 22nd August 1743. [2] *Ibid.*, 18th July 1743.
[3] *Ibid.*, 22nd October 1743.

some of the people went to Romley, the curate, to request leave to partake of the Lord's Supper. But the proud clergyman answered: "Pray tell Mr. Wesley I shall not give *him* the Sacrament, for he is not *fit*." After relating the fact in his *Journal*, John Wesley adds: "How wise a God is our God! There could not have been so fit a place under heaven where this should befall me first, as my father's house, the place of my nativity, and the very place where, 'according to the straitest sect of our religion,' I had so long 'lived a Pharisee!' It was also fit, in the highest degree, that he who repelled me from that very table, where I had myself so often distributed the bread of life, should be one who owed all in this world to the tender love which my father had shown to his, as well as personally to himself."[1]

In the course of the following February he paid a third visit to Newcastle. The community, which had so fast formed itself in that place, was suffering from the effects of that hasty growth, and required careful pastoral management. After personal observation he felt the need of thoroughly sifting the society, and the result was that one hundred and forty persons were "put away."

The Revival was still progressing in the town, and conversions were multiplied. Wesley paid special attention to the physical phenomena which accompanied those conversions. It was ascertained that all those who had experienced these strange seizures had previously enjoyed excellent health, that the symptoms came upon them in a moment without any previous notice, that they assumed the form of a complete physical and mental prostration, accompanied by violent pain. This pain was variously described by the persons whom Wesley questioned. Some said that they felt just as if a sword

[1] *Journal*, 2nd January 1743.

was running through them: others, that it was as though a great weight was lying upon their chest: others, again, that they were quite choked, so that they could not breathe. In every case deep spiritual distress had accompanied the physical symptoms, which ceased as soon as their souls were set at liberty.[1]

In the neighbourhood of Newcastle, Wesley preached the gospel in several places.

At Chowden he found a population of colliers that filled his soul with deep compassion. "I found," says he, "we were got into the very Kingswood of the north. Twenty or thirty wild children ran round us as soon as we came, staring as in amaze. They could not properly be said to be either clothed or naked. One of the largest (a girl about fifteen) had a piece of a ragged, dirty blanket some way hung about her, and a kind of cap on her head of the same cloth and colour. My heart was exceedingly enlarged towards them; and they looked as if they would have swallowed me up."[2]

At Pelton, in the middle of the sermon, "one of the old colliers," he relates, "began shouting, for mere satisfaction and joy of heart; but their usual token of approbation (which somewhat surprised me at first) was clapping me on the back."[3]

In the village of Placey he met with another specimen of an almost savage, yet accessible population, whose sympathies he always felt disposed to try and win. "It is inhabited," he says, "by colliers only, and such as had been always in the first rank for savage ignorance and wickedness of every kind. Their grand assembly used to be on the Lord's day; on which men, women, and children met together to dance, fight, curse and swear, and play at chuck, ball, span-farthing, or whatever came

[1] *Journal*, 12th March 1743. [2] *Ibid.*, 8th March 1743.
[3] *Ibid.*, 17th March 1743.

next to hand. I felt great compassion for these poor creatures from the time I heard of them first, and the more because all men seemed to despair of them. Between seven and eight (on Good Friday) I set out with John Heally, my guide. The north wind, being unusually high, drove the sleet in our face, which froze as it fell, and cased us over presently. When we came to Placey we could very hardly stand. As soon as we were a little recovered I went into the square, and declared Him who 'was wounded for our transgressions' and 'bruised for our iniquities.' The poor sinners were quickly gathered together, and gave earnest heed to the things which were spoken. And so they did in the afternoon again, in spite of the wind and snow, when I besought them to receive Him for their King; to 'repent, and believe the gospel.'"[1]

A few days after, Wesley preached there again, and soon remarkable conversions took place. On his fourth visit to the north, in the July following, he organised at Placey a small society which gave him great satisfaction. And several years after he could say of them: "The society of colliers here may be a pattern to all the societies in England. No person ever misses his band or class: they have no jar of any kind among them; but with one heart and one mind 'provoke one another to love and to good works.'"[2] Whenever he visited the north he was happy to be among the "honest and simple-hearted colliers at Placey."

Returning from Newcastle, Wesley was joined at Birstal by his valiant friend Nelson, and with him paid his first visit to Leeds, a place which was to become a metropolis of Methodism in the north of England. Here he found a little society already formed through the instrumentality of Nelson.

[1] *Journal*, 1st April 1743. [2] *Ibid.*, 13th June 1757.

It was not everywhere that Wesley and his fellow-labourers enjoyed such a reception as they had met with at Newcastle. And even there symptoms of disorder appeared, which required all his authority of speech and presence of mind to keep in check. A drunken crowd of young men having one day broken into the chapel, he interrupted his preaching, and began to pray for them with that irresistible fervour which he always threw into the holy exercise. The mob, startled by so unexpected a movement on his part, were completely beaten, and quietly withdrew.[1]

In London the evil passions of the multitude were still more violently unloosed. One day, while Wesley was preaching in a public place called the Great Gardens, "many of the beasts of the people laboured much to disturb those who were of a better mind. They endeavoured to drive in a herd of cows among them, but the brutes were wiser than their masters. They then threw whole showers of stones, one of which struck me just between the eyes; but I felt no pain at all, and, when I had wiped away the blood, went on testifying with a loud voice that God hath given to them that believe, 'not the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.' And by the spirit which now appeared through the whole congregation, I plainly saw what a blessing it is when it is given us, even in the lowest degree, to suffer for His name's sake." [2]

In another part of the metropolis, at Chelsea, the people amused themselves by throwing wild-fire and other combustibles into the room where his audience was peacefully assembled.[3] This appears to have been a favourite diversion at that time with the people of

[1] *Journal*, 18th March 1743. [2] *Ibid.*, 12th September 1742.
[3] *Ibid.*, 26th January 1742.

London and its vicinity. At Windsor, says Wesley, "I was soon informed that a large number of the rabble had combined together, and declared again and again there should be no preaching there that day. In order to make all sure, they had provided gunpowder enough, and other things, some days before. But Burnham Fair coming between, they agreed to go thither first, and have a little diversion there. Accordingly they went, and bestowed a few of their crackers upon their brother-mob at Burnham. But these, not being Methodists, did not take it well, turned upon them and gave them chase. They took shelter in a house. But that would not serve; for those without soon forced a way in, and seized on as many as they could find, who, upon information made, were sent to gaol: the rest ran away; so that when I came, none hindered or interrupted."[1]

These disorders were not long permitted to remain unchecked in London and the neighbourhood. The authorities took active proceedings against the ringleaders, and the chief of the judges of Middlesex said to Mr. Wesley: "We have received orders to do you justice whenever you claim our protection."[2] An opportunity soon presented itself. A multitude of the baser sort assailed one of the places of worship with showers of stones, some of which broke the roof, and, falling on the congregation, endangered their very lives. Wesley warned the mob that unless they left the place he would bring some of them before the magistrates. Finding that his warning was unheeded, he had one of the ringleaders arrested and conducted under strong escort to a court of justice.[3] This firmness was of great service, and an end was soon put to these

[1] *Journal*, 26th September 1742. [2] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xiii. p. 310.
[3] *Journal*, 25th January 1742.

disturbances, so far as the capital was concerned. In the course of this last scene a remarkable incident occurred. A man and his wife, who took the lead among the rioters, and seemed to be more enraged than any of them, as soon as they entered the chapel, turned pale, and, smitten with sudden conviction, fell on their knees and cried to God for mercy.

These, however, were but slight skirmishes compared with the terrible attacks made on the Methodists during the years 1743 and 1744 in Staffordshire.

In the southern part of that country lies a region known as the Black Country, on account of its rich coal mines and its manufactures. That district includes several manufacturing towns north-west of Birmingham, namely, Wolverhampton, Bilston, Darlaston, Wednesbury, Walsall, etc., with a population, in our days, of almost a million souls for about one hundred thousand acres. It was already inhabited, in the eighteenth century, by a numerous population of colliers and other workmen, to whom Methodism brought the gospel light. Wednesbury, where the events happened which we are going to relate, was at that time a small town, known only by its bull-baiting and cock-fighting habits. The very fact that the inhabitants passionately loved those barbarous pastimes suffices to give an idea of their moral level.

Charles Wesley had already preached there in 1742. His brother came about the beginning of the following year, stayed there four days, preached eight times, and organised a society numbering about a hundred members. The parish clergyman seemed favourably disposed towards Methodists. Unfortunately his feelings changed, owing to what Wesley himself calls "the inexcusable folly" of the lay-helper sent there for the purpose of keeping up the work. The man had spoken in a very

unguarded manner about the official clergy and about their flocks, and thus he was partly the cause of the strong opposition that arose among the people against Methodism. When Charles returned to Wednesbury, in May 1743, a perfect storm assailed him. They threw mud and stones at him, whilst he was preaching at Walsall from the market steps.

Things grew worse day by day. The clergymen of both places fulminated in the pulpit against Methodists. The magistrates refused to hear their complaints when they were insulted, and, instead of protecting them, accused them of being themselves the cause of those disorderly movements.[1] The mob, being thus encouraged to license by the very men who ought to have guided it in the ways of righteousness, committed all manner of excesses. They broke windows, pillaged the houses, and ill-treated bodily those who were suspected of

[1] Eight days before John Wesley arrived at Wednesbury for the second time the justices of peace in that district had issued the following proclamation, which may be taken as a fair sample of their religious toleration :—

"*Staffordshire.*

"To all High-Constables, Petty-Constables, and other of His Majesty's Peace Officers, within the said County, and particularly to the Constable of Tipton [near Walsall]:

"WHEREAS, we, His Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the said County of Stafford, have received information that several disorderly persons, styling themselves Methodist Preachers, go about raising routs and riots, to the great damage of His Majesty's liege people, and against the peace of our Sovereign Lord the King:

"These are, in His Majesty's name, to command you and every one of you, within your respective districts, to make diligent search after the said Methodist Preachers, and to bring him or them before some of us His Majesty's Justices of the Peace, to be examined concerning their unlawful doings.

"Given under our hands and seals, this 14th day of October 1743.

"J. LANE.

"W. PERSEHOUSE."

(From *Journal*, vol. i. p. 441.)

belonging to the new sect. One of these persons, Francis Ward, was left by them lying as dead in the street. Women and children were dragged in the gutter. The riot leaders, being undisturbed masters of the country for several days, drew up a formula of recantation, and all Methodists who refused to sign it were beaten and cruelly treated, insomuch that several were in danger of losing their lives.

When Wesley was apprised of the trials through which the brethren at Wednesbury were passing, he decided to go there at once and bear to them comfort and encouragement. His way was always to look danger in the face. The very day on which he arrived there, he preached at twelve in the heart of the town, and, whether his boldness took the crowds by surprise, or for some other reason, he was not disturbed. But in the afternoon, while he was quietly writing in his room, he discovered from the noise that the mob had beset the house. He exhorted the people with whom he was lodging to engage in prayer. For a moment it seemed as if the people were about to disperse, but presently, being reinforced by new arrivals, they rallied again to the attack. "The cry of one and all was, 'Bring out the minister; we will have the minister.' I desired one to take their captain by the hand and bring him into the house. After a few sentences interchanged between us the lion was become a lamb. I desired him to go and bring one or two more of the most angry of his companions. He brought in two, who were ready to swallow the ground with rage, but in two minutes they were as calm as he. I then bade them make way, that I might go out among the people. As soon as I was in the midst of them, I called for a chair, and, standing up, asked, 'What do any of you want with me?' Some said, 'We want you to go with us to the justice.'

I replied, 'That I will, with all my heart.' I then spoke a few words, which God applied; so that they cried out with might and main, 'The gentleman is an honest gentleman, and we will spill our blood in his defence.'"[1] Some were not of the same mind, and Wesley went with two or three hundred of the mob, through torrents of rain, to the justice, who lived about two miles from the town. This gentleman, Mr. Persehouse, whose circular had excited the evil instincts of the crowd, now refused to intermeddle with the matter, on the plea that he was in bed.

In the meantime the news had spread through Walsall that Wesley had just been brought thither under good escort; immediately all the worst characters in the town (and they were many) gathered together and set out in search of him. "The Darlaston mob made what defence they could, but they were weary as well as outnumbered, so that in a short time, many being knocked down, the rest ran away, and left me in their hands. To attempt speaking was vain, for the noise on every side was like the roaring of the sea. So they dragged me along till we came to the town, where, seeing the door of a large house open, I attempted to go in, but a man, catching me by the hair, pulled me back into the middle of the mob. They made no more stop till they had carried me through the main street, from one end of the town to the other. I continued speaking all the time to those within hearing, feeling no pain or weariness. At the west end of the town, seeing a door half open, I made toward it, and would have gone in; but a gentleman in the shop would not suffer me, saying, they would pull the house down to the ground. However, I stood at the door, and asked, 'Are you willing to hear me speak?' Many cried out, 'No, no! Knock his brains out; down with him; kill him at

[1] *Journal*, vol. i. p. 437.

once.' Others said, 'Nay, but we will hear him first.' I began asking, 'What evil have I done? Which of you all have I wronged in word or deed?' And continued speaking for above a quarter of an hour, till my voice suddenly failed: then the floods began to lift up their voice again; many crying out, 'Bring him away, bring him away!' In the meantime my strength and my voice returned, and I broke out aloud in prayer. And now the man who just before headed the mob turned and said, 'Sir, I will spend my life for you: follow me, and not one soul here shall touch a hair of your head.' Two or three of his fellows confirmed his words, and got close to me immediately. . . . The people then, as if by common consent, fell back to the right and left; while those three or four men took me between them and carried me through them all, . . . till a little before ten God brought me safe to Wednesbury, having lost only one flap of my waistcoat, and a little skin from one of my hands. I never saw such a chain of providences before." The following are the chief of them. In descending a steep and slippery part of the road, many attempts were made to throw him down: had they been successful he would probably have been trodden to death. But he made no stumble at all, nor the least slip, till he was entirely out of their hands. A strong man aimed several blows with a bludgeon at the back of his head, but they were all turned aside, Wesley says, he knew not how. He received a powerful blow on the chest, and another on the mouth, making the blood gush out; but he felt no more pain, he affirms, from either than if they had touched him with a straw. And from the beginning to the end he found the same presence of mind, and prayed aloud for his tormentors. His brother, who met him soon after, could not help saying: "He looked like a soldier of Christ: his clothes were torn to tatters."

In appearance, Wesley had been conquered at Wednesbury and Walsall; in reality, he was the conqueror. And the proof of this is that his brother Charles, visiting the place a little later, found quite a change in the disposition of the people; many conversions took place, and among the number was that of the man that headed the mob, who was a notorious prize-fighter. Charles asked him what he thought of his brother. "Think of him?" said he,—"that he is a man of God, and God was on his side when so many of us could not kill one man." A man of God, indeed, was John Wesley, daunted by no difficulty in the great work of saving men's souls. Like his Master, not only could he face persecution, but also that which is more difficult still, going through humiliating tasks which the world despises.

Pursuing his journey northwards, Wesley arrived at Grimsby, where he preached in the open air, and on the following day sought a place in which to hold his meetings. The inhabitants, however, fearing the consequences, refused to lend their houses for such a purpose. At last a woman offered him the use of her house. She was an unfortunate, who had abandoned her husband, and been for some time leading a life of dissipation. Wesley, calling to mind the example of his Master, and hoping to snatch this brand from the burning, accepted her invitation. He preached on the "woman that was a sinner," who washed the Lord's feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. The prodigal was "utterly broken in pieces," and afterwards came to his lodgings, crying out, "Oh, sir, what must I do to be saved?" Wesley replied, "Escape for your life. Return instantly to your husband." She answered that her husband was at Newcastle, a hundred miles off. The great missionary

reflected a little, and then told her, "I am going for Newcastle in the morning, you may go with me. William Blow shall take you behind him." And so he did. Fancy John Wesley travelling along the high-roads of England side by side with this poor fallen creature, whom he had rescued from evil, and leading her by his encouragements to the Friend of repenting sinners! Perhaps there is not, in the whole life of Wesley, a more touching scene than this: it reminds one of the good shepherd bringing the lost sheep back to the fold.

Cornwall, where Methodism was introduced about the same time, presented a moral appearance not more satisfactory than that of Staffordshire. The population along the coast was openly addicted to the practice of smuggling, and the no less criminal custom of plundering wrecked ships was considered a legitimate perquisite. Drunkenness, cock-fighting and bull-baiting, boxing and other noisy games, were the favourite pleasures of the people. Religion was at a discount, and the clergy had generally neither moral worth nor zeal enough to bring about a better state of things. And yet it was they who did, like their brethren in other parts of England, most violently oppose the heralds of reformation.[1]

In the small seaport of St. Ives, quite near the farthest extremity of the peninsula, a few Christians, how-

[1] An amusing fact, related by Mr. F. Truscott, may give our readers some idea of the ignorance, in the matter of religion, that prevailed in Cornwall in the time of Wesley. In a village near Helstone there was not a single copy of the Bible; they had, in the way of religious books, only a Prayer-book, which was to be found at the village inn. One day, during a frightful storm, the people of the place thought the end of the world had come. They all ran to the tavern, and began to ask Tom, the waiter, to read a prayer for them. Tom took up the first volume he found, and began to read it with a solemn voice, whilst everybody was kneeling. What he read alluded certainly to storms and wrecks, and that seemed to satisfy both reader and hearers that it was the proper thing. But the landlady of the inn, who was a little brighter,

ever, had gathered round a pious woman named Catherine Quick. They met in order to pray and to read Burkitt's *Notes on the New Testament.* A Bristol Methodist found them out, and they asked him to invite the Wesleys to visit them. Charles arrived there in July 1743. On the following day he went to church, and had to encounter a first attack from the parish minister, who levelled his discourse at the Methodists, calling them "the new sect, enemies to the Church, seducers, troublers, scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites." At Wednock the curate behaved in a still more violent manner, since he tried to inflame the people against Methodists, by telling them that "the Methodists ought to be driven away by blows, and not by arguments." These incitements were not without effect; for scenes, very much like those enacted at Wednesbury, were witnessed at Wednock and St. Ives: the mob assaulted and sacked the houses where pious people were known to live, meetings were violently interrupted, and those who attended them most cruelly ill-treated. At Pool the mob, headed by one of the church-wardens, drove away from the parish the preacher and his friends.[1]

Shortly after his brother's return, Wesley visited Cornwall in company with Nelson, and spent in the county three well-filled weeks. He preached at several places, which had never before been visited. He even

suddenly interrupted by saying, "Tom, that is *Robinson Crusoe*!" "No," said Tom, "it is the Prayer-book." And he went on until his mistress, more and more convinced of the fact, again remonstrated that she was certain Tom was reading *Robinson Crusoe.* "Well, well," said Tom, "suppose I am,—there are as good prayers in *Robinson Crusoe* as in any other book"; and so Tom pursued his reading as long as the storm lasted. When it had stopped, the villagers withdrew with the honest conviction that they had fulfilled their religious duty.—*Methodist Magazine,* 1820, p. 358.

[1] The parish registers preserve to this day a record of expenses at the village inn "for driving the Methodists."

sailed to the Scilly Islands, about nine leagues west of the Land's End. During this period of indefatigable labour he often suffered for lack of the common necessaries of life. His bed was frequently the bare boards, and his only pillow Nelson's topcoat. One night Wesley jocosely said to his companion: "Brother Nelson, let us be of good cheer, I have one whole side yet; for the skin is off but on one side." More than once they had to endure the pangs of hunger in the midst of a people who were slow to comprehend the duty of hospitality. Wesley one day stopped his horse, and began to pick the blackberries that were growing in the hedge, and ate them with evident relish, saying, as he did so: "Brother Nelson, we ought to be thankful that there are plenty of blackberries; for this is the best country I ever saw for getting a stomach, but the worst that ever I saw for getting food. Do the people think we can live by preaching?"[1] These trials were, however, not so formidable as those which his brother had recently met with in the same county. Now the opponents tried again to agitate, but John Wesley's presence of mind disconcerted their plans. "As I was preaching at St. Ives, Satan began to fight for his kingdom. The mob of the town burst into the room, and created much disturbance; roaring and striking those that stood in their way, as though Legion himself possessed them. I would fain have persuaded our people to stand still; but the zeal of some, and the fear of others, had no ears: so that, finding the uproar increase, I went into the midst, and brought the head of the mob up with me to the desk. I received but one blow on the side of the head; after which we reasoned the case till he grew milder and milder, and at length undertook to quiet his companions."[2]

[1] John Nelson's *Journal*, p. 74.
[2] Wesley's *Journal*, 16th September 1743.

Wesley had frequently numerous and attentive congregations among the miners who lived on the extreme point of Cornwall. At Morva he preached to the largest audience he had seen as yet in that county. Later on, at Trezuthan Downs, he had two or three thousand people. At Gwennap the number of his hearers was supposed to have been ten thousand, congregated in a quarry, where he often preached subsequently. "I could not conclude," says he, "until it was so dark we could scarce see one another. And there was on all sides the deepest attention; none speaking, stirring, or scarce looking aside. Surely here, though in a temple not made with hands, was God worshipped in 'the beauty of holiness.' One of those who were present was Mr. P., once a violent adversary. Before sermon began he whispered one of his acquaintance, 'Captain, stand by me; don't stir from me.' He soon burst out into a flood of tears, and quickly after sunk down. His friend caught him and prevented his falling to the ground. Oh, may the Friend of sinners lift him up!"[1]

On the following morning Wesley was to preach a last time at five o'clock, before taking leave of these well-disposed people. But he was awoke between three and four by a large company of miners, who, "fearing they should be too late, had gathered round the house and were singing and praising God." He preached to them on "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." He remarks, "They all devoured the word." No doubt such scenes went far to make him forget calumnies and persecutions.[2]

Some idea of Wesley's great activity may be collected from the way in which he filled up his last Sunday in Cornwall. Very early in the morning he preached at Land's End; about ten, at St. Just; at one p.m., at

[1] *Journal*, 20th September 1743. [2] *Ibid.*, 21st September 1743.

Morva, where, after preaching, he met the society, more than one hundred members; at four, at Zennor; and he ended his day's work by holding another meeting at St. Ives. Thus in one Sunday he held six meetings in five different places, riding at least twenty miles in order to pass from one to another.

When Wesley left Cornwall, where Nelson was remaining in order to pursue the good work, he could feel that he had not laboured in vain. For there were already several hundred members in society, and the preaching of the gospel was attended by numerous and well-disposed hearers.

On returning to London or to Bristol, the itinerant would resume the functions of a pastor. "I cannot understand how any minister can hope ever to give up his account with joy, unless (as Ignatius advises) he knows all his flock by name; not overlooking the men-servants and maid-servants."[1] At Bristol, in the beginning of that year, he took the trouble of speaking with every member of the society separately. In London the two brothers undertook the same close review, working at it from six in the morning to six in the evening until it was finished. This latter society, before the end of 1743, numbered more than two thousand members.

The Foundery chapel had become insufficient. In the month of May, the same year, Wesley secured another in West Street, near Seven Dials; it had been built sixty years before, for the use of the Huguenot refugees. When he was in London with his brother they preached there by turns, and administered the Lord's Supper twice every month. Communicants were so numerous that the morning service, on such occasions, lasted five hours. They had "to divide the communicants into three

[1] Tyerman, vol. i. p. 420.

parts, that they might not have above six hundred at once."

Three months later the London Methodists took possession of a third chapel at Snowsfields, "on the other side of the water," that is, in Southwark. It had been built by a Unitarian lady, "a poor Arian misbeliever," as Wesley calls her in his *Journal*. Some people strongly urged upon him that he ought not to go and preach in that quarter: it was so ill-famed, "the people there were not men, but devils." But, far from altering Wesley's purpose, such information was for him one reason more for beginning a work there. He opened this third place of worship by preaching on these words: "Jesus said, They that be whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Although his societies were made up almost exclusively of poor people, they knew how to make great sacrifices, in order both to cover the expenses connected with the places of worship and to relieve the destitute. They divided London into twenty-three districts, each of which had two visitors appointed by Wesley, and who were to visit the sick three times every week and to provide for their wants, both material and religious.

Whilst Methodism was thus perfecting its organisation, its adversaries were not inactive, and persecution increased. Charles Wesley was always to be found in the front rank, where blows happened to fall. At Sheffield the populace, headed by a military officer, broke into one of his meetings; the preacher bravely kept his ground at the peril of his life, and received several wounds in the course of the affray. The officer, enraged at his firmness, drew his sword and pointed it at the preacher's breast, but did not succeed in frightening him. The Sheffield mob, excited by the declamations

of an intolerant clergy, proceeded to the greatest excesses, and entirely demolished the Methodist chapel.

The year 1744 brought Wesley and his fellow-labourers new trials, equally severe with those we have just described. Popular demonstrations were the order of the day. These were no longer confined to the destruction and pillage of property: the very persons of the Methodists were not safe. One preacher received serious bodily injuries, another was ducked in a river till he was nearly dead. These servants of God, in their encounters with the populace, counted themselves happy when they escaped with a whole skin, and had nothing more to complain of than that their garments were torn to tatters or covered with mud. Some of the towns of Staffordshire were for months at the mercy of the mob. At Darlaston, poor defenceless women were maltreated. The Walsall mob organised a regular crusade against Methodism: a flag was made, which was frequently hoisted in the market-place, and borne before the multitude when they proceeded on their expeditions. The houses suspected of harbouring Methodists were devoted to destruction: the defenders of the Church appropriated what they pleased of the furniture, and broke the rest in pieces. From these storms of popular fury men and women fled, not knowing where to turn for shelter. Their constancy and faithfulness were beyond all praise. When overtures of peace were made to them on condition that they promised not to receive the preachers any more, they stoutly refused, saying: "We have already lost all our goods; and nothing more can follow but the loss of our lives, which we will lose too rather than wrong our consciences."

These persecuted ones had no protection. Public opinion was hostile to them, and misrepresented their conduct and motives. The *London Evening Post* published

an article which began as follows: "By a private letter from Staffordshire we have advice of an insurrection of the people called Methodists." It was stated that, under pretence of having been insulted by the Church party, they had raised an insurrection, and after committing several assaults, had burnt down the house of one of their opponents.

Thus calumniated before the public, the Methodists could obtain no redress from the civil or ecclesiastical authorities. At Dudley, on the instigation of the clergyman, the mob laid violent hands upon a preacher, and would have murdered him but for an honest Quaker who lent him his broad-brimmed hat and plain coat, and so enabled him to effect his escape. At Walsall the magistrates permitted a placard to remain on the walls announcing the destruction of the Methodists on a certain day. At Wednesbury one of those functionaries offered five pounds to have them driven out of the town; and another sanctioned the riots by his presence, and shouted, "Huzza, boys! well done!—stand up for the Church!"

While the magistrates were thus bravely defending the Church, its ministers were not behindhand. During his second tour through Cornwall, in 1744, Wesley heard a sermon in which the Methodists were denounced as Papists, and as the partisans of the Pretender, Charles Stuart. In another place the minister himself called the mob together, at the sound of a drum, for the purpose of interrupting the Methodist services, and, after supplying his auxiliaries at a tavern with plentiful potations, led them on to the attack. The vicar of Birstal, whose quiet was disturbed by the activity of Nelson, joined with a publican belonging to the neighbourhood in delivering the preacher to the military authorities, and succeeded in getting him impressed into

the service under the Act for the prevention of vagrancy. Two other itinerants suffered in the same way, and one of them fell a victim to the treatment he received in the army.

To these persecutions were added all sorts of calumnies. Accusations of hypocrisy and imposture were of too common occurrence to ruffle Wesley's mind. Gibes and jeers were showered upon him, but he remained unmoved. All weapons seemed lawful in such a warfare as this. At Newcastle he saw a placard on the walls announcing that a company of actors from Edinburgh would the same evening perform a piece entitled, "Trick upon Trick, or Methodism displayed." Hatred and prejudice were so rife that the most absurd reports concerning the hated sect gained credence. Some said that Wesley had hanged himself; others that he had been prosecuted for unlawfully selling gin; others declared that he usurped his own name, and that the real John Wesley had been dead for many years. A Quaker in one place, an Anabaptist in another, it was still more generally suspected that he was a Jesuit of the worst kind, harbouring priests in his house, and labouring in an underhand way to destroy the Established Church. The popular mind, agitated by rumours connected with the invasion of the Pretender, did not fail to associate with these the name of Wesley. He was an agent of the Spanish Government, sent to excite a feeling in favour of the fallen dynasty, and to organise secretly a body of twenty thousand men in aid of the Spanish army, whenever it should make a descent upon the coast. He had been seen with the Pretender in France, and finally, had been arrested on a charge of high treason. These absurd reports obtained such currency that the authorities themselves took the alarm; Wesley was ordered to appear before the

justices of Surrey, and required to take the oath of allegiance to the king, and to sign the declaration against Popery. Early in 1744, when the Government issued a proclamation requiring all Catholics to quit London, Wesley remained a week longer in the city, in order not to afford fresh grounds for scandal. His brother was also indicted before the magistrates in Yorkshire, on account of a suspicious expression he had made use of in one of his prayers. He had said, "Turn again our captivity, O Lord," and this was supposed to apply to the exiled dynasty. Of course, he did not find it difficult to explain what he meant by using such symbolical language.

The opposition thus created by the enemies of the Revival did not for a moment daunt the champions of this noble cause. It only served to show the urgent necessity that existed for their labours; it only encouraged them to devote themselves with greater ardour than ever to their work.

CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST CONFERENCE

(1744)

The Wesleys had been engaged for the last five years in that work of revival which ultimately took proportions altogether unexpected by them. The elder of the two brothers had become the natural head of the movement, owing to his superior talents and to that gift for government which was so remarkable in him. But the time seemed to have come when the responsibility should be shared by his fellow-labourers. Accordingly, early in 1744, he invited those few clergymen of the Established Church who sympathised with him in his work, together with the principal lay-preachers who served him "as sons in the gospel," to meet him in London, in order to consider the best means of carrying on the work of God. The object of this first Conference is clearly indicated in the letter of invitation: it was not to organise a Church, but simply to consult how best to prosecute the work of the Revival.

This first Conference began at the Foundery, London, on Monday, 25th June 1744, and lasted the whole week. It included, besides the two Wesleys, four other clergymen: John Hodges, rector of Wenvo (in Wales); Henry Piers, vicar of Bexley, who had been converted by the means of Charles Wesley, and who became one of the most devoted supporters of the movement; Samuel Taylor, vicar of Quinton, a great-grandson of

Dr. Rowland Taylor, who confessed his faith at the stake in the time of the Bloody Mary; lastly, John Meriton, a minister in the Isle of Man, who associated in the last years of his life with his friends the Wesleys, in assisting them in the chapels they had built. Of the four lay-preachers who took part in that first Conference, three afterwards became ministers in other denominations: they were, Thomas Richards, Thomas Maxfield, and John Bennet. The fourth, John Downes, alone lived and died a Methodist.

The day before the Conference commenced its members solemnly partook of the Lord's Supper, and in the morning Charles Wesley preached to the assembled brethren. One of the first resolutions taken by the assembly was as follows: "It is desired that all things be considered as in the immediate presence of God; that we may meet with a single eye, and as little children who have everything to learn; that every point may be examined from the foundation; that every person may speak freely what is in his heart; and that every question proposed may be fully debated, and 'bolted to the bran.'"[1]

The first preliminary question was then proposed, namely, "How far does each of us agree to submit to the unanimous judgment of the rest?" It was answered: "In speculative things, each can only submit as far as his judgment shall be convinced. In every practical point, so far as we can, without wounding our several consciences."[1]

The first great design of this meeting was then proposed under three heads, viz.—"1. What to teach; 2. How to teach; 3. What to do; that is, how to regulate our doctrine, discipline, and practice."

Two whole days were devoted to the investigation of the vital doctrines which were to be taught by the preachers. Wesley and his friends laid the greatest

[1] George Smith, *History of Wesleyan Methodism* (1859), vol. i. p. 211.

stress on these practical truths which are fundamental to the Christian life, such as repentance, faith, justification, sanctification, and the witness of the Spirit. Their business, however, was not to draw up a creed or confession of faith, but clearly and strongly to reassert the great doctrines which the Church had, more or less, allowed to drop into oblivion. Their work was that of witnesses rather than of theologians.[1]

As to the best general method of preaching, the Conference recommended the preachers: "1. To invite. 2. To convince. 3. To offer Christ. Lastly, to build up; and to do this, in some measure, in every sermon."

Another subject that inevitably claimed the serious consideration of the Conference was the relation of the societies to the Established Churches. Wesley still clung to the belief that it was possible to maintain a substantial unity, though the attitude of the clergy was beginning to awaken in his mind some fears on this point. On the question, "How far is it our duty to obey the bishops?" the Conference gave its judgment as follows: "In all things *indifferent*. And on this ground of obeying them, we should observe the canons, so far as we can *with a safe conscience*."[2] The spirit which dictated this resolution was both judicious and liberal, and it shows the marked advancement that had taken place in Wesley's ecclesiastical views.

The internal discipline of the societies also received a due share of attention, as is shown by the following questions and answers:—"*Q.* How are the people divided who desire to be under our care? *A.* Into the united societies, the bands, the select societies, and the penitents. *Q.* How do these differ from each other?—

[1] See *Minutes of some late Conversations between the Rev. Mr. Wesley and others*, in his *Works*, vol. viii. p. 275.

[2] *Works*, vol. viii. p. 280.

A. The united societies (which are the largest of all) consist of awakened persons; part of these, who are supposed to have remission of sins, are more closely united in the bands. Those of the bands who seem to walk in the light of God, compose the select societies; those of them who are for the present fallen from grace, meet apart as penitents." Particular rules for each of these classes of members were adopted by the Conference. Among the rest are to be found the Rules of the Society which are still in force at the present day. The most remarkable point in connection with them is that they do not make any particular religious opinion the basis of union. There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies,—"a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and be saved from their sins."

Experience soon showed the impracticableness of a fourfold division of the societies, according to the spiritual state of the several members. This arrangement soon, however, became modified, and the excellent idea that gave rise to it was carried out in a more simple form. This idea, which may be regarded as the fundamental principle of Methodism, and to which it owes its individuality, is that of associated spiritual life; and it found its realisation in the class-meeting. These little gatherings satisfied that instinctive desire for communion and mutual edification which is one of the natural features of a living Church, and formed a practical embodiment of the idea of "small churches within the Church," *ecclesiolæ in ecclesia*,—which was common to the Moravians and to Spener. A small number of persons seeking the salvation of their souls were placed under the direction of an experienced Christian, and thus formed a kind of spiritual family, in which they communed together of their joys and

sorrows, their prosperity or adversity; in which the strong ministered to the weak, and learned to bear them, and the weak were stimulated by the example of the strong, and learned to surmount their weakness. In our opinion, the class-meeting, more than any other human institution, has realised the great idea of the unity of the Church and of the communion of saints. And by making this the foundation of his system, Wesley secured the prosperity and permanence of his work. It was the class-meeting alone that made it possible for Methodism to spread through England with such rapidity. It kindled everywhere new fires of religious life, which could, if necessary, become self-feeding and maintain an independent existence, and thus formed an indispensable auxiliary to missionary operations. And it provided a religious training for thousands of new converts, whose transition was immediate, from a state of indifference and sometimes of brutishness to the enjoyment of spiritual life.

We have already seen how lay-preaching became with Wesley a practical necessity. It was time to inquire into the lawfulness and utility of this novel institution. The Conference did not hesitate to declare its conviction that this new agency met the urgent needs of the times, and encouraged Wesley to employ "lay-helpers" in cases of necessity.[1] Their office was, "in the absence of a minister, to feed and guide the flock." The Conference also drew up thirteen rules for their observance,[2] recommended that they should keep a journal, and added an exhortation to watch against formalism both in themselves and others. The question was also raised of providing a "seminary" for such

[1] Smith, *History of Wesleyan Methodism*, vol. i. p. 214.

[2] Those thirteen rules are substantially the same with the twelve "Rules of a Helper," as found in the *Large Minutes*.

labourers; but the project was postponed, the time being not yet come for its efficient realisation.

It was evident that neither Wesley nor his friends understood as yet the value and importance of lay-preaching, and the service it was to render to the Methodism of the future. Though already a considerable body (numbering about fifty), the lay-helpers were as yet only regarded by Wesley as "extraordinary messengers," whose mission would cease whenever the clergy yielded to the growing influence of the Revival. The majority of them still followed their secular calling, while engaged in the labours of an itinerant ministry. They were men of great simplicity and little learning, but full of faith and zeal, and threw themselves into the work that Wesley assigned them with the utmost energy. He had called them into the field, and they willingly accepted his leadership. It was his to regulate their movements, to fix the limits of their circuits, and generally to superintend their labours. The twelfth rule of a helper was as follows: "Act in all things, not according to your own will, but as a son in the gospel. As such, it is your part to employ your time in the manner which we direct; partly, in preaching and visiting the flock from house to house; partly, in reading, meditation, and prayer. Above all, if you labour with us in our Lord's vineyard, it is needful you should do that part of the work which we advise, at those times and places which we judge most for His glory."

The complete obedience that Wesley thus expected from his lay-helpers was necessitated by the claims of the work. He was confiding the care of souls to men who, though endowed with much faith and zeal, were lacking for the most part in mental culture. He was therefore compelled, by the force of circumstances, to accept a kind of episcopal power; and to it his assistants

joyfully submitted. It should also be said, that he wielded this power to the great advantage of the preachers, stimulating their intellectual as well as spiritual activities, directing them in their reading, pointing out the defects in their preaching,—in a word, labouring with all his might to fit them for the important work to which Providence had called them. Nothing can be more interesting than the correspondence he carried on with them. "Your talent in preaching," he writes to one of them, "does not increase. It is just the same as it was seven years ago. It is lively, but not deep; there is little variety; there is no compass of thought. Reading only can supply this, with meditation and daily prayer. You wrong yourself greatly by omitting this. You can never be a deep preacher without it, any more than a thorough Christian. Oh, begin! Fix some part of every day for private exercises. You may acquire the task you have not: what is tedious at first, will afterwards be pleasant."[1]

Wesley made use of his authority over the preachers, not only to incite them to study but also to encourage them in their work: he was their personal friend as well as their director. One of them was upon one occasion overwhelmed with doubts respecting his call, and wrote to beg of him to send someone else in his place, as he did not feel himself to be in his right place. "My dear brother," replied Wesley, "you do indeed appear to me to be out of your place, for the time you have spent in reasoning you ought to have spent in prayer."[2] Such an authority, grounded on such a superiority of attainments, and tempered by an overflowing affection and benevolence, could not but command a prompt and cheerful acquiescence; and it may be truly said that no

[1] Letter CXCVII., vol. xii. of *Works*, p. 238.
[2] Southey, *Life of Wesley*, chap. xvi.

leader ever had at his disposal a better disciplined and more devoted band.

After spending several days upon the grave questions connected with the extension of the Revival, the members of the first Conference separated, and resumed their evangelical labours. This little gathering bore no resemblance whatever to a formal Synod: its object was, not to found an ecclesiastical organisation but to determine the best means, indicated by Providence, of reviving the Church and saving souls. Wesley and his friends, indeed, appear to have formed no conception of the proportions which their work was to assume.

The past, however, afforded a hopeful augury for the future. In the five years that had elapsed since the commencement of the Revival, its success had surpassed all expectations. Its two great branches, divided by a single doctrinal point, vied with each other in zeal and activity. Still, that of which Wesley was the representative, owing to its superior organisation, was rapidly distancing the other. There are no complete statistics of the Methodism of this period. The itinerant preachers numbered, as we have stated, about fifty; and the members of society were counted by thousands. In London alone there were two thousand two hundred.

Every part of England, properly so called, was already comprised within the circle of Wesley's itinerancy and that of his friends, from Newcastle in the north to Land's End in the extreme south-west. London, Bristol, St. Ives, and Newcastle were the centres of the movement; latterly, a new one had been formed at Wednesbury in the Midland district.

Opposition, indeed, had not been wanting. But this attitude of the English people precisely proved their need of the gospel, and did not daunt the spirit of the missionary. In these very mobs, embruted by drunken-

ness and enraged with anger, he could discern the true English people, with its susceptible spirit, likely to be as ardent in its good impulses as in those that were now leading it astray. It was not by flattery, however, that Wesley sought to tame the savage tyrant accustomed to defy the Government itself and to follow its own capricious bent. The gradual revolution in the sentiments of the people towards him is solely attributable to the moral power he wielded. If, after having been despised and reviled, he came to be, as a preacher, beloved and respected by the masses, it was because they felt that his bold and authoritative utterances proceeded from a loving and devoted heart. Frivolous and inconstant in its tastes, as the multitude may be, it knows how to render justice, sooner or later, to those who have loved it and laboured for its good.

Wesley did not find it so easy to overcome the malice of those of his opponents, in whose behalf could not be pleaded the ignorance and prejudice of the mob. The clergy and the magistracy, as we have seen, so far from restraining the madness of the people, often excited it. Their conduct presents one of the most pitiable spectacles that the eighteenth century can furnish,—the magistrate's robe and the minister's surplice soiled by the mire of a street affray. "They encourage the people," said Wesley, "to treat us as persons for whom there is no law, and as so many mad dogs."

The period which may properly be denominated as that of the birth of Methodism, terminates at the first Conference, in which its principles were enunciated with such modesty and firmness. We shall next follow the gradual development of the work; and in order to do so, it will be enough to resume the thread of Wesley's life, for never was workman more thoroughly identified with his work.

Book Third

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORK
(1744–1770)

CHAPTER I

CONFLICTS AND SUCCESSES

(1744–1747)

ENCOURAGED by the prospects of usefulness that lay before him, Wesley resumed his labour with indefatigable zeal. In August 1744 it was his turn, as one of the Fellows, to preach before the University of Oxford. An opportunity was thus afforded him, which he did not fail to embrace, of addressing to the dignitaries of the Church a calm and luminous exposition of the evangelical doctrines, together with a respectful but strongly worded exhortation to the performance of the special duties that devolved upon them. "I preached," he says in his *Journal*, "I suppose the last time at St. Mary's. Be it so. I am now clear of the blood of these men. I have fully delivered my own soul."[1] That sermon strongly indisposed the heads of the university and a great many students. The former did not forgive him for reminding them of their duties which they neglected. The latter resented his upbraiding them for their frivolity and their vicious conduct. It was consequently decided that henceforth Wesley should not be allowed to preach in St. Mary's, and when his regular turn came he was informed that a substitute had been appointed.

[1] *Journal*, 24th August 1744.

While he knew how to turn to the best account the few opportunities that were offered him of preaching the gospel to the higher and better instructed portion of the community, he did not forget that his special mission was to the "little ones." He continued to pursue his missionary journeys, undeterred even by the rigours of winter. The ill-kept roads were rendered almost impracticable in winter by the falls of snow or the overflowing of rivers, and more than once he was in danger of losing his life. He often had to dismount and lead his reluctant horse where it could scarcely keep its footing on the ice. In February 1745 he had two very trying days. He speaks of them in his *Journal* as follows: "Many a rough journey have I had before, but one like this I never had; between wind, and hail, and rain, and ice, and snow, and driving sleet, and piercing cold: but it is past; those days will return no more, and are therefore as though they had never been." [1]

For such troubles as these he found abundant compensation in the success vouchsafed to his ministry. Besides, he was too much absorbed in his great work to pay much attention to the petty discomforts which necessarily attended it. While on his journeys, he did not confine himself to the work of addressing the multitudes that assembled at every place on his route: he took advantage of the smallest opportunity for labouring in his Master's cause. As he was riding, he would accost those whom he fell in with, enter into conversation with them, and endeavour to direct their minds to religious subjects. His amiable disposition, together with his remarkable conversational powers, caused his society to be eagerly sought: his already widespread reputation, and the different opinions current con-

[1] *Journal*, 23rd February 1745.

cerning him, excited curiosity; and persons frequently came from long distances in order to see and to speak to him.

In the latter part of the year 1744 the Methodists in Cornwall had much to suffer. Wesley remarks that "the war against the Methodists was carried on more vigorously than that against the Spaniards."[1] One of his preachers wrote to him as follows: "The word of God has free course here; it runs and is glorified. But the devil rages horribly. Even at St. Ives we cannot shut the door of John Nance's house, to meet the society, but the mob immediately threatens to break it open." And those threatenings soon took effect; for the people of St. Ives demolished the Methodist chapel, in token of their joy at the victory gained by Admiral Matthews over the Spanish. A preacher, while speaking at Camborne, was forcibly seized upon and carried to prison as a vagrant; he had to remain there until the quarter-sessions, when he was set at liberty.

The instigator of that persecution was Dr. Borlase, a clergyman well known for his learning and as the author of a remarkable book on the antiquities of Cornwall, but a most bigoted Churchman, who headed the clergy of his county in a merciless pursuit of the Methodists. It was he who, in the year following, succeeded in getting Maxfield impressed into the army, and caused a summons to be taken against Wesley himself, who, in the course of his visit to Cornwall in 1745, was in consequence arrested. But such a prisoner could not but be a source of great embarrassment to his enemies, who felt that it would be difficult to pass off as a vagabond, having no visible means of subsistence, a clergyman with so dignified a bearing. He was soon released; but the same day, at Gwennap, a zealous magistrate interrupted

[1] *Works*, vol. xiii. p. 316.

him in his open-air preaching by cries of "Seize him! seize him! I say, seize the preacher for His Majesty's service!" As no one appeared ready to obey this order, he seized the preacher by the arm and made him his prisoner, but on reflection he let him go.[1]

The next day, at Falmouth, Wesley had to encounter, not a vacillating magistrate but an infuriated populace. He was paying a visit to a lady when "the house," he tells us, "was beset on all sides by an innumerable multitude of people. A louder or more confused noise could hardly be at the taking of a city by storm. At first Mrs. B. and her daughter endeavoured to quiet them. But it was labour lost. They might as well have attempted to still the raging of the sea. They were soon glad to shift for themselves, and leave K. E. and me to do as well as we could. The rabble roared with all their throats, 'Bring out the Canorum! Where is the Canorum?' (an unmeaning word which the Cornish generally use instead of Methodist). No answer being given, they quickly forced open the outer door and filled the passage. Only a wainscot partition was between us, which was not likely to stand long. I immediately took down a large looking-glass which hung against it, supposing the whole side would fall in at once. When they began their work with abundance of bitter imprecations, poor Kitty was utterly astonished, and cried out, 'Oh, sir, what must we do?' I said, 'We must pray.' Indeed, at that time, to all appearance, our lives were not worth an hour's purchase. She asked, 'But, sir, is it not better for you to hide yourself? to get into the closet?' I answered, 'No. It is best for me to stand just where I am.' Among those without were the crews of some privateers which were lately come into the harbour. Some of these, being angry at

[1] *Journal*, 3rd July 1745.

the slowness of the rest, thrust them away, and, coming up all together, set their shoulders to the inner door and cried out, 'Avast, lads, avast!' Away went all the hinges at once, and the door fell back into the room. I slipped forward at once into the midst of them, and said, 'Here I am. Which of you has anything to say to me? To which of you have I done any wrong? To you? Or you? Or you?' I continued speaking till I came, bareheaded as I was (for I purposely left my hat that they might all see my face), into the middle of the street, and then, raising my voice, said, 'Neighbours, countrymen! Do you desire to hear me speak?' They cried vehemently, 'Yes, yes, he shall speak. He shall. Nobody shall hinder him.' But having nothing to stand on, and no advantage of ground, I could be heard by few only. However, I spoke without intermission, and, as far as the sound reached, the people were still; till one or two of their captains turned about and swore not a man should touch him. Mr. Thomas, a clergyman, then came up and asked, 'Are you not ashamed to use a stranger thus?' He was soon seconded by two or three gentlemen of the town and one of the aldermen, with whom I walked down the town, speaking all the time till I came to Mrs. Maddern's house. The gentlemen proposed sending for my horse to the door, and desired me to step in and rest the meantime. But on second thoughts, they judged it not advisable to let me go out among the people again: so they chose to send my horse before me to Penryn, and to send me thither by water; the sea running close by the back-door of the house in which we were."[1]

As he pursued his journey through Cornwall, Wesley strove to revive the spirit of the societies which had been somewhat daunted by opposition. Some were

[1] *Journal*, 4th July 1745

in great consternation: here, he was informed that the church-wardens and constables were preparing to lay violent hands upon him:[1] there, a body of drunken miners were "coming to do terrible things." "I laboured much," says he, "to compose their minds: but fear had no ears; so that abundance of people went away. I preached to the rest on, 'Love your enemies.' The event showed this also was a false alarm, an artifice of the devil, to hinder men from hearing the word of God."[2]

At Tolcarn he had to encounter another assault of the mob, who broke in upon him while preaching in the open air. Wesley was standing on a high wall, and succeeded for some time by his voice and gestures in keeping them within bounds. But he was thrown down from the wall, and had to give up the service, only too happy to have escaped without serious injury.[3] At Stithians, while he was preaching, the agents of the authorities, with a view no doubt of frightening others, arrested one of the audience and impressed him into the army.[4] One of the members of the society at Trevint was driven out of the place; but the measure only turned to the advantage of the cause, of which this humble Christian became, wherever he went, the faithful defender and advocate. His success was such in every place he visited that Wesley said: "I never remember so great an awakening in Cornwall wrought in so short a time, among young and old, rich and poor, from Trevint quite to the seaside."[5]

Wesley now left Cornwall, and crossed the Channel to Wales, where he found himself in the midst of widely different scenes. "We were here, as it were, in a new world, in peace, and honour, and abundance.

[1] *Journal*, 5th July 1745. [2] *Ibid.*, 6th July 1745.
[3] *Ibid.*, 7th July 1745. [4] *Ibid.*, 14th July 1745.
[5] *Ibid.*, 15th July 1745.

How soon should I melt away in this sunshine! But the goodness of God suffered it not."[1] At this period, in fact, the principality was, of all parts of the kingdom, that in which the Revival had met with the greatest sympathy and the least opposition.

In the north also, where Wesley made two journeys in 1745, he was generally well received, even among the upper classes of society. He wrote thus to his brother: "It was time for me to give them the ground at Newcastle, and to fly for my life. I grew more and more honourable every day: the rich and great flocking to us together, so that many times the room would not hold them. Iniquity for the present hath stopped her mouth; and it is almost fashionable to speak well of us. In all appearance, if I had stayed a month longer, the mayor and alderman would have been with us."[2]

During Wesley's stay at Newcastle he made an acquaintance with a pious Roman Catholic priest in a way that deserves to be noticed. This man, named Watson Adams, watched over a little flock of Roman Catholics who had settled at Osmotherley, fifty miles south of Newcastle. Although he was a priest, his mind was open to the truth, and he called upon Wesley with the intention of inquiring for himself about Methodism. Notwithstanding that such intercourse was likely to bring upon Wesley some unpleasant comments, he did not hesitate to accommodate the priest for several days in the Orphan-house, and supplied him with all the information he could desire. One result of the interview was the establishment of a lasting friendship between Wesley and Adams; another was the opening of a Methodist work at Osmotherley, as we shall presently see.

[1] *Journal*, 19th July 1745. [2] *Works*, vol. xii. p. 111.

On Easter Monday, just a week after the visit of Adams, Wesley set out on his way back to London. At four in the morning he took leave of his Newcastle friends by preaching once more before a numerous audience, which included many well-to-do and educated persons. After the service he at once mounted his horse, and by eight o'clock he reached Chester-le-Street, where he preached in the open air to a numerous and quiet assemblage. He then resumed his journey, and towards evening again preached in an inn at North Allerton, where he found "a noble people who received the word with all readiness of mind."[1]

Adams, the Catholic priest, had come with a few of his neighbours in order to hear Wesley, and they entreated him to pay them a visit. He complied with their request, and at ten o'clock in the evening he reached Osmotherley, after riding fifty miles, and having already preached three times in the course of the day. At that time of night, in the village among the hills, everybody had gone to bed. But the priest and his friends went from door to door to announce a meeting. An hour later, Wesley was able to preach his fourth sermon for that day in an old Franciscan chapel. It was after twelve when he went to rest at his new friend's house, and he tells us, "Through the blessing of God, I felt no weariness at all."

On the following morning, at five, he preached on Justification by Faith "to a large congregation, part of whom had sat up all night, for fear they should not wake in the morning." After the sermon a Quakeress, who, according to the principles of the sect, had never been baptized, abruptly asked him: "Dost thou think water baptism an ordinance of Christ?" He answered: "What saith Peter? 'Who can forbid water, that

[1] *Works*, vol. xii. p. 111.

these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Ghost even as we?' I spoke but little more," says Wesley, "before she cried out, 'Tis right! 'Tis right! I will be baptized.' And so she was, the same hour."[1]

Although Methodism was introduced in the village under such peculiar circumstances, it became established there. A society was formed, and in 1754 a chapel was built which was used for a hundred and eleven years. It was superseded in 1865 by a more elegant building. Wesley was fond of stopping in the village, although removed several miles from the road between London and Newcastle, and rather difficult of access. He frequently lodged with his old friend, the Catholic priest. When he visited him in 1776, he found him "just quivering over the grave," and in his following journey he writes: "I found my old friend Mr. Watson, who first brought me into this country, was just dead, after living a recluse life near fifty years. From one that attended him, I learned that the sting of death was gone, and he calmly delivered up his soul to God."[2]

On his way back to London, Wesley preached at the chief places on the road. At Sheffield he proclaimed the gospel before a large and serious audience, "on the floor of the late house which the good Protestant mob had just pulled down."[3] Near Birmingham, whilst

[1] *Journal*, 16th April 1745. The Quakeress was named Elizabeth Tyerman, and her grandson, the Rev. Luke Tyerman, the copious and learned biographer of Wesley, Whitefield, and Fletcher, was born at Osmotherley. He has related how it was through listening to the reminiscences of an old Christian lady that he first conceived that passionate fondness for Methodist history which has led him to so many interesting discoveries, although the subject had already been several times explored.

[2] *Journal*, 8th May 1777.

[3] Tyerman, vol. i. p. 488.

he preached, "the stones and dirt were flying from every side, almost without intermission, for near an hour. However, very few persons went away." [1]

Whilst he was thus pursuing his labours through the most important counties of England, his coadjutors were vigorously seconding him in the midst of sufferings and struggles that cannot be detailed here. His brother always occupied the forefront rank, and none plunged into the fight with greater ardour than he. The battle was waging at many points simultaneously, and each soldier bravely did his duty. Wesley was the soul of the movement, animating his fellows with his own intrepid zeal, and setting them the example of a whole-hearted consecration to the cause of God.

The great work responded so completely to the wants of the age, that it seemed to break out spontaneously in places the most remote from each other, and Wesley often learned with surprise the success of humble and devoted fellow-labourers, of whose very existence he had not been previously aware. About this time, for instance, he received the joyful intelligence that Methodism had found its way into the English army then upon the Continent. The war of the Spanish succession had just commenced: England had taken up arms in behalf of Maria Theresa, while France espoused the opposite side. Flanders was the battlefield of the contending armies. Among the English troops there were a few soldiers who had heard the preaching of the Methodists in England, and in whom it had borne fruit. Their piety had ripened amid the dangers of warfare, and their zeal had awakened many of their comrades. John Evans, John Haime, Sampson Staniforth, and Mark Bond were the leaders of this remarkable movement. They commenced a regular course of evangelical activity which accom-

[1] *Journal*, 5th May 1745.

plished marvellous results. In most of the regiments numerous conversions took place: the converts formed themselves into little societies for mutual edification, and their numbers soon exceeded three hundred. The most intelligent and pious among them acted as preachers, and the number of these amounted to seven. John Haime often preached five times a day in various parts of the camp, with the consent of his officers, who released him to a great extent from his military duties, and were in general favourable to his work. Large tents were even supplied for soldiers who wanted to meet for worship. At Bruges, the General permitted Haime to preach every day in the English church. The Methodist soldiers marched to the services, and their serious demeanour and joyous psalmody edified all. Other soldiers occupied a place of worship at Ghent.

On 11th May, at the terrible battle of Fontenoy, the Methodists proved to their comrades that Christian soldiers could fight and die at the post of duty. Four of the preachers and a great number of the members fell on the field of battle. "I am going to rest on the bosom of Jesus," said one of the wounded to his fellows. "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" exclaimed another with his last breath. John Evans had both legs cut off by a chain-shot: he was laid across a cannon to die; and, as long as he could speak, he ceased not to praise God and to exhort all those that were about him.[1]

In thus finding its way to the battlefield, Methodism was faithful to its providential mission, as it had already been in its care for the colliers at Kingswood and Newcastle. God was evidently employing its adherents as His messengers to all sorts of souls for whom nobody cared.

Though a large number of Methodist soldiers lost

[1] *Journal*, 3rd December 1744, and 2nd December 1746.

their lives in the Continental campaign, many returned to England, and there united themselves to Wesley's societies: some of them entered the ranks of his itinerancy. He himself took a deep interest in this remarkable movement, and kept up a constant correspondence with several of these godly soldiers. The joy their letters afforded him was the double joy of the missionary and of the patriot. Of Wesley's patriotism there could be no doubt, and circumstances soon arose which put it to the proof.

In the course of the year 1745 the whole country was thrown into a state of great alarm by the descent on Scotland of the Pretender, Charles Edward Stuart. At first his arms were attended with some success: he gained possession of Edinburgh, and from thence threatened the north of England. Wesley was fully alive to the fact that the success of the Pretender would be the triumph of Popery, and the forerunner of the downfall of his country's liberties. He therefore threw all the weight of his influence and example into the scale of the king's authority and the nation's interests. When tidings came of the invasion, he immediately set out for Newcastle, whose northern position exposed it to the greatest danger. On his arrival he wrote to the mayor a remarkable letter, in which he avows his patriotism and fidelity to the legitimate sovereign. Shortly after he offered to preach to the soldiers of the garrison, for whose religious wants no provision was made, and he preached several times to the troops in the open air. These labours were not without results, and the abortive attempt of the Pretender had at least the effect of arousing some souls from religious indifference.

In the spring of 1746 Wesley visited the south-west, where his labours were again greatly blessed.

Wales gave him a hearty reception, and Cornwall, which the year before had been the scene of so many trials, seemed to strive to make reparation. He was not once disturbed by the mob, and he had the joy of finding that many of his persecutors had been converted. The societies were everywhere becoming more consolidated, and there were evident tokens that the work which had been wrought among the miners was of a durable kind.

On the return of winter he set out again for the north, not heeding the rigours of the season, which he had to encounter in all their severity. "When we came to Hatfield," says he, "neither my companions nor I had much use of our hands or feet. After resting an hour, we bore up again, through the wind and snow, which drove full in our faces. But this was only a squall. In Baldockfield the storm began in earnest. The large hail drove so vehemently in our faces that we could not see, nor hardly breathe." The day after, the weather was still worse. The rain and hail "drove through our coats, great and small, boots and everything, and yet froze as it fell, even upon our eyebrows. On the third day of the journey their man-servant said to him: "Sir, there is no travelling to-day. Such a quantity of snow has fallen in the night that the roads are quite filled up." But Wesley answered: "At least, we can walk twenty miles a day, with our horses in our hands." And so they did, and went on through terrible weather, preaching in the evening wherever they stopped.[1]

Most abundantly, indeed, was he compensated for these sufferings by the delightful progress of which he was the witness in the societies that lay along his route. On the 24th of February 1747 he writes: "At noon I examined the little society at Tetney. I have not seen such another in England. In the class-paper (which

[1] *Journal*, 16th to 18th February 1747.

gives an account of the contribution for the poor) I observed one gave eightpence, often tenpence a week; another thirteen, fifteen, or eighteen pence; another sometimes one, sometimes two shillings. I asked Micah Elmoor, the leader (an Israelite, indeed, who now rests from his labours), 'How is this? Are you the richest society in all England?' He answered, 'I suppose not; but all of us who are single persons have agreed together to give both ourselves and *all we have* to God: and we do it gladly; whereby we are able, from time to time, to entertain all the strangers that come to Tetney; who often have no food to eat, nor any friend to give them a lodging.'"[1] With such adherents Methodism could face the future without fear; its destiny was practically decided.

Wesley found the northern societies, generally, in a prosperous condition. At Newcastle, while perfect harmony reigned among the members, he perceived that the preaching was appreciated by many beyond the circle of the ordinary congregation, and that prejudice was on the wane even among the upper classes. He visited fresh localities, in which his labours laid the foundations of a permanent work, and placed these new interests under the care of his itinerant preachers, who were themselves continually increasing in number. One of these, John Nelson, whom Wesley met again during the course of this journey, was still distinguishing himself by his Christian heroism as well as by the success that attended his ministry. He had just escaped, as by a miracle, out of the hands of a furious mob at York, who had almost stoned him to death, and left him wallowing on the ground in his own blood. Wesley comforted his valiant colleague, and, after a short interview, resumed his journey. At Leeds, where Nelson

[1] *Journal*, 24th February 1747.

had introduced Methodism, Wesley's preaching awakened a deep interest, and drew together multitudes of people. At Keighley, where on a previous visit he had formed a society of ten members, he found two hundred. He also visited a country parish, where the clergyman, William Grimshaw, had recently been converted by the means of a Methodist preacher, and became one of Wesley's most devoted friends and co-workers. At Manchester he preached to several thousands in the open air. Toward the end of the service he was interrupted by a few individuals, who threatened to bring out the fire-engine and let it play upon him if he did not desist.

This slight misadventure was almost the only one Wesley had to encounter in this northern journey. The popular feeling had become in many places greatly modified in his favour. The outbreaks that did occur were quickly repressed, and that sometimes by the aggressors themselves. Such was also the case during a visit which he paid to the south-west in the summer of 1747. "About six in the evening," he writes at Plymouth, on the 27th of June, "I went to the place where I preached the last year. A little before we had ended the hymn came the lieutenant, a famous man, with his retinue of soldiers, drummers, and mob. When the drums ceased, a gentleman barber began to speak; but his voice was quickly drowned in the shouts of the multitude, who grew fiercer and fiercer as their numbers increased. After waiting about a quarter of an hour, perceiving the violence of the rabble still increasing, I walked down into the thickest of them, and took the captain of the mob by the hand. He immediately said: 'Sir, I will see you safe home: sir, no man shall touch you. Gentlemen, stand off; give back! I will knock the first man down that touches him.' We walked on in great peace; my conductor every now and then

stretching out his neck (he was a very tall man), and looking round to see if any behaved rudely, till we came to Mr. Hide's door. We then parted in much love. I stayed in the street near half an hour after he was gone, talking with the people, who had now forgot their anger, and went away in high good humour."[1]

At St. Agnes the mob threw at Wesley clods and mud. But a man, who had filled his pockets with stones, intending to throw them at him, was taken by surprise when he heard the preacher announce as his text these words, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." The coincidence was so strange, and the sermon that followed was so strong, that the man's purpose was completely altered, and one by one he let his pebbles drop to the ground, and listened most attentively to the end.[2]

That new tour through the south-western counties was exceedingly gratifying to Wesley's mind. "How strangely," says he, "has one year changed the scene in Cornwall! This is now a peaceable, nay, an honourable, station. They give us good words almost in every place. What have we done that the world should be so civil to us?"

"A great door and effectual," he wrote a few days later, "is opened now, almost in every corner of this country. Here is such a change within these two years as has hardly been seen in any other part of England. Wherever we went we used to carry our lives in our hands; and now there is not a dog to wag his tongue. Several ministers are clearly convinced of the truth; few are bitter; most seem to stand neuter. Some of the gentlemen (so called) are almost the only opposers now; drinking, revelling, cursing, swearing gentlemen, who neither will enter into the kingdom of heaven

[1] *Journal*, 27th June 1747. [2] *Ibid.*, 30th June 1747.

themselves, nor suffer any others, if they can prevent it. The most violent Jacobites among these are continually crying out that we are bringing the Pretender; and some of these worthy men bear His Majesty's commission as justices of the peace."[1]

The success vouchsafed to Wesley's labours could not but encourage him to attempt new enterprises. He had scarcely returned from these tours, which had occasioned him so much joy, when he prepared for a campaign which seemed likely to entail much hardship, but to the eye of his faith revealed the prospect of great success. But we must reserve for the next chapter an account of Wesley's mission to Ireland, and we will now attempt to give a sketch of his pastoral, philanthropic, and literary activity during the period we have just described.

As a pastor, Wesley was no less distinguished than as a missionary. But at that critical epoch of the religious movement his ministry had to contend with special difficulties. The Revival of the eighteenth century, like all great revivals of religion, was attended with a parasitical growth of eccentric and wild speculations. Some minds were prone to submit to the influence of dangerous teachings, which substituted a fatal Quietism for the healthy and holy struggles of faith. Such leanings were only to be counteracted by firmness mingled with great wisdom. Wesley did not hesitate to exercise his authority in the societies where it was acknowledged, even to the extent of excluding those members whose behaviour was a reproach to the gospel. This he did, in 1746, at Nottingham, at Birmingham, and at Wednesbury. In the last place, where persecution had raged so fiercely, Wesley says: "the Antinomian teachers had laboured hard to destroy this poor people. I talked an hour with the chief of them, Stephen

[1] *Works*, vol. xii. p. 167.

Timmins. I was in doubt whether pride had not made him mad."

At Birmingham he had to deal with "another of their pillars," who had troubled the whole society, and the conversation that took place will give an idea of the pernicious notions that were current among such people. "Do you believe you have nothing to do with the law of God?" "I have not: I am not under the law: I live by faith." "Have you, as living by faith, a right to everything in the world?" "I have: all is mine, since Christ is mine." "May you then take anything you will anywhere? Suppose, out of a shop, without the consent or knowledge of the owner?" "I may, if I want it; for it is mine: only, I will not give offence." "Have you also a right to all the women in the world?" "Yes, if they consent." "And is not that a sin?" "Yes, to him that thinks it is a sin; but not to those *whose hearts are free.*"

Wesley could not help concluding, "Surely these are the first-born children of Satan."[1] And surely he was right in fighting against such monstrous teachings with the same zeal which St. Paul had displayed against the "false apostles" of his time. One of the societies lost half of its members in that process of discipline. Another was momentarily torn asunder by a schism which carried away most of the membership. Even one of the preachers left Wesley in order to join the other side.

Wesley had also to contend with enthusiasts, whom he did not like better than the Antinomians. He usually dealt with them on the Scripture plan: "Answer a fool according to his folly." Already in 1739 he had become acquainted with the "French Prophets," as they were called, a last remnant of those who appeared in the south of France at the time of the

[1] *Journal*, 22nd March 1746.

Camisards, which remnant tried to perpetuate itself in London, where it had taken refuge and made some stir in the early years of last century. Wesley had the opportunity of visiting a young woman whom he heard "prophesying," mostly in Scripture language; but he concluded, "the motion might be hysterical or artificial."[1] For some time the Revival seemed to be leaning that way, and some, whose minds appeared naturally inclined to the delusions of *Illuminati*, were carried away.

Wesley gives the following account of an interview he had with two pretended "Prophets." "Two of those who are called *Prophets* desired to speak with me. They told me they were sent from God with a message to me; which was, that very shortly I should be *born'd* again. One of them added, they would stay in the house till it was done, unless I turned them out. I answered gravely, 'I will not turn you out,' and showed them into the society-room. It was tolerably cold, and they had neither meat nor drink; however, there they sat from morning to evening. They then went quietly away, and I have heard nothing from them since."[2]

In 1746 Wesley went to see another "who called himself a Prophet." "He aimed," says Wesley, "at talking Latin, but could not; plainly showing he understood not his own calling."

It was a happy circumstance for the movement that it was headed by a man gifted with a sedate mind, strong common sense, and a powerful will, who could ward off the dangerous consequences such tendencies might have entailed upon Methodism.

But he found plenty of other matters to attend to in the care of his societies. He required all his talent for organisation, in order to establish a complete system of

[1] *Works*, vol. i. p. 173.
[2] *Journal*, 3rd November 1742.

arrangements inside these little communities. A special chapter must be reserved for the decisions of the yearly Conferences; but a few items of the administrative order had better be inserted here.

In 1746 Wesley transferred the property of chapels and other buildings to trustees that were chosen from among the members.

In the same year, with a view to relieve the sufferings of sick people who were too poor to call in the doctor, he opened dispensaries in London and Bristol, where remedies were distributed gratuitously to the poor, and where he himself, attended by an apothecary or a surgeon, examined the patients and prescribed for them. He always had a taste for medical pursuits, and he had even spent a few months studying the science before he left for Georgia. He took it up again, with the sole ambition of procuring a little relief to others in ordinary and simple cases.[1]

In 1747 Wesley gave a new organisation to his diaconate: rules intended to make that work more efficient for the relief of the poor. At that time, and for a considerable period after, all the money collected in the classes was spent for charitable purposes: it was much later that it was applied to the wants of the preachers.[2]

Little by little other charitable institutions clustered round the Foundery chapel. Wesley hired two small houses which he used as lodgings for poor widows. In

[1] It was in the following year that Wesley published his *Primitive Physic: or, An easy and Natural Method of Curing most Diseases*, which was translated, a few years after, into French, and appeared in Lyons. Of course, the medical knowledge of Wesley, as it appears in that book, seems very much behindhand in our days, and some of the remedies he recommends would provoke a smile. But then, it must be remembered how undeveloped and rude the art of healing diseases was at that time.

[2] Moore, *Life of Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 108.

1748 he writes: "In this (commonly called the poor-house) we have now nine widows, one blind woman, two poor children, two upper-servants, a maid and a man. I might add, four or five preachers; for I myself, as well as the other preachers who are in town, diet with the poor, on the same food and at the same table; and we rejoice herein, as a comfortable earnest of our eating bread together in our Father's kingdom."[1]

A school had also been established, where about sixty children received primary education, most of them without paying anything. They were under very strict discipline, since they had no holiday besides Sunday, and were made to attend every day the preaching at five in the morning.

The philanthropic institutions which Wesley had founded were completed by the creation of a lending fund. He began with a very modest sum, fifty pounds, which he had collected among his friends, and which by degrees reached one hundred and twenty. The stewards of that fund were to lend small sums to those who were in want of money: at first, it was only one pound, and it was to be refunded at the end of three months. "It is almost incredible," says Wesley, "but it manifestly appears from their accounts that, with this inconsiderable sum, two hundred and fifty have been assisted within the space of one year. Will not God put it into the heart of some lover of mankind to increase this little stock? If this is not 'lending unto the Lord,' what is?"[2]

Thus, towards the middle of last century, Wesley had already originated one of those loan societies for working people which are so much talked about nowadays. He had the satisfaction of witnessing the usefulness of this institution confirmed by numerous facts: hundreds of poor families were enabled to better their condition;

[1] *Works*, vol. viii. p. 256. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. viii. p. 267.

some were even set by that means upon the road to fortune. Such was the case with Lackington, who was a poor unemployed cobbler before 1774, when the loan fund enabled him to begin a small trade as a bookseller. Eighteen years later his annual sales averaged over one hundred thousand volumes, and he had an income of £5000.

The enemies of Wesley, who saw him founding so many works, asserted that he had laid by a large fortune, and that he derived a splendid income from his societies. The plain fact is that he had no resources beyond his stipend as a Fellow of Oxford, and the money he gained by selling his books. As to the society money, he made it a point not to have anything to do with it. "All that is contributed or collected in every place is both received and expended by others; nor have I so much as the 'beholding thereof with my eyes.'"[1]

Wesley earnestly took to heart the intellectual development of his lay-helpers. Not only did he always exhort them to study, but he would meet several of them together whenever he could, in order to give them some instruction. "This week," he writes, "I read over with some young men a compendium of rhetoric and a system of ethics. I see not why a man of tolerable understanding may not learn in six months' time more of solid philosophy than is commonly learned at Oxford in four (perhaps seven) years."[2] He wished to lay down a course of studies for the younger preachers, and took the advice of Doddridge, who was at the head of the Theological Institution of Northampton, and who sent him in answer a detailed list of text-books embracing the various branches of theology.

This intercourse with the most noteworthy Dissenter of that time was unrestrained and affectionate; and it

[1] *Works*, vol. viii. p. 268. [2] *Journal*, 4th March 1747.

shows of itself that Wesley's Church prejudices were decidedly on the wane, if they had not quite disappeared.

But it was not only to Dissenters, properly so called, that Wesley extended the right hand of fellowship. He had drawn nearer to the friends of Whitefield, who was himself visiting the churches in America, and scattering everywhere the sparks of revival. The letters which the two friends exchanged were henceforth kind and confiding. Here is one Whitefield wrote to Wesley in October 1746 :—

"The regard I have always had for you and your brother is still as great as ever; and I trust we shall give this and future ages an example of true Christian love abiding, notwithstanding difference in judgment. Why our Lord permitted us to differ as to some points of doctrine will be discovered at the last day. I have had the pleasure of reading the continuance of your appeal; and pray that God would prosper every labour of your pen and lip. I find that Antinomianism has been springing up in many places. I bless God you have made a stand against it. If you ask how it is with me, I answer, happy in Jesus, the Lord my righteousness. If you ask what I am doing,—ranging and hunting in the American woods after poor sinners. If you ask with what success,—my labours were never more acceptable; and the door, for fifteen hundred miles together, is quite open for preaching the everlasting gospel. In Maryland and Virginia, people fly to hear the word like doves to the windows. Congregations are large, and the work is going on just as it began and went on in England."[1]

But it was not only between the two leaders of Methodism, and across the Atlantic, that brotherly greetings like these were exchanged. In England, also,

[1] Tyerman, vol. i. p. 506.

their followers drew near each other. In January 1746 a Conference took place at Bristol, in which Howell Harris with eleven of his preachers met Wesley with four of his helpers. The object of the meeting was to remove every obstacle to brotherly love between the two branches of Methodism. After praying together, the members of this Conference considered the case of a place in Wales, called Neath, where Wesley had preached, and it was apprehended there would, in consequence, be a schism. But Wesley made the following statement: "I do not design to erect a society at Neath, or any town in Wales where there is a society already, but to do all that in me lieth to prevent any such separation."

The resolution adopted is thus expressed in the *Minutes* of the said Conference:—

"We all agreed that, if we occasionally preached among each other's people, we should endeavour to strengthen and not to weaken each other's hands, and prevent any separation in the several societies; and that a brother from Wesley's society should go with Harris to Plymouth and the west, to heal the breach there made, and to insist on a spirit of love and its fruits among the people. Agreed that we should, on each side, be careful to defend each other's characters."

When we remember how sharp had been the conflict which brought about the separation, five or six years before, and also how important in the opinion of both parties were the questions discussed, we must acknowledge that such an effort does credit to these godly men, and shows that they might part from each other without forgetting to love one another.

It remains to be noticed that the period we have just been describing was, for Wesley, one of great literary activity. Every year he published numerous

writings, some of which were answers to the attacks of enemies of Methodism, whilst others were intended for the edification of the societies.

It was for the use of the societies that collections of hymns were printed from the beginning of the movement, and were supplemented year by year by new hymns, most of them the fruits of Charles Wesley's wonderful poetical genius. In 1744, the year when persecution was so fierce, a volume appeared containing *Hymns for Times of Trouble and Persecution.*

Dr. Stoughton says, in regard to these hymns: "If some compositions arose out of controversy, others sprung out of persecution. Hymns for times of trouble were published in 1744, some of them plaintive and patient, others ringing with trumpet notes of defiance and victory. It is easy to imagine a band of Methodists, threatened by the rabble, taking up the hymn appointed '*To be sung in a tumult,*' which begins with these triumphant lines—

> 'Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim
> And publish abroad His wonderful name:
> The name all-victorious of Jesus extol;
> His kingdom is glorious, and rules over all.'"[1]

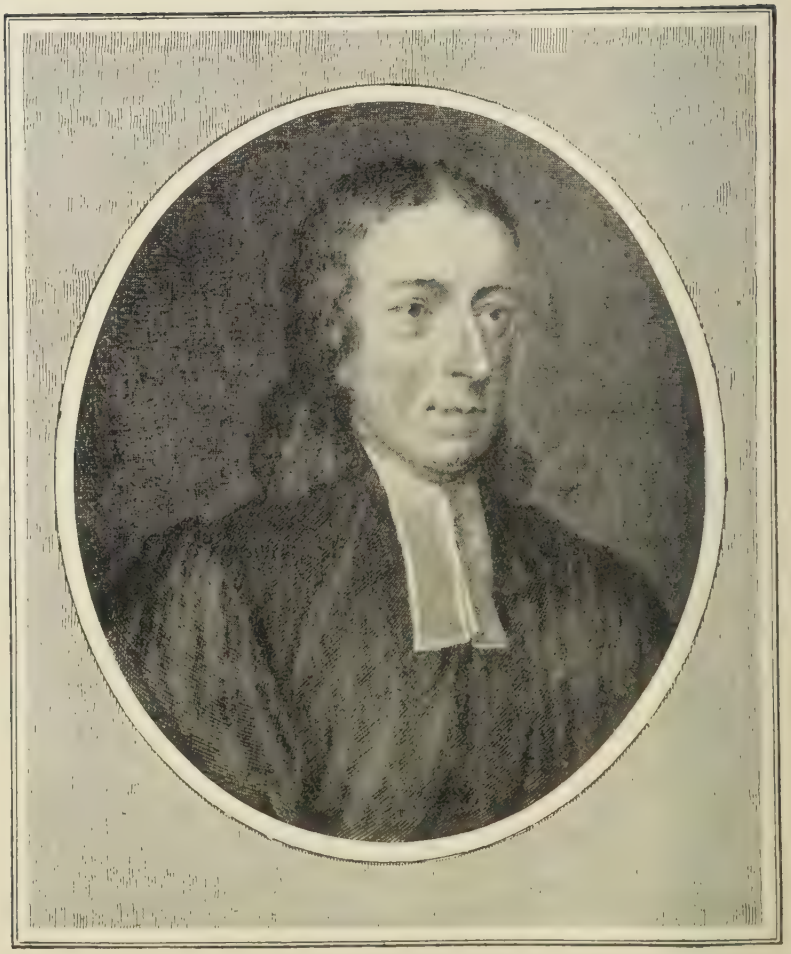
We cannot give a detailed account of the many biographies, books of edification, books of history, by various authors, which Wesley abridged and arranged for the use of his societies. In 1746 he published a first volume of Sermons, in which the chief evangelical doctrines are expounded. About the same time appeared his *Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, an

[1] Stoughton, *Religion in England under Queen Anne and the Georges*, vol. i. p. 409. Like several others, this collection of hymns bore the united names of John and Charles Wesley. It has been reprinted in vol iv. of *Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, published by Dr. Osborn.

eloquent plea on behalf of the Methodist Revival, and characterised by a peculiarly powerful style. He also wrote short religious tracts for the people, of which thousands of copies were given away in all parts of England. And he thus anticipated what is now the special work of Religious Tract Societies.

The religious movement we are describing was not yet ten years old, and already Wesley had issued about a hundred books or pamphlets of all sizes.[1] This is a curious fact to note in connection with a work which affected mostly the lower classes of society, and was in no sense of a scientific character.

[1] On the subject of Wesley's prodigious literary activity, it will be found most interesting to refer to Dr. Osborn's learned bibliography of Methodism, which has appeared under the name, *Outlines of Wesleyan Bibliography*, London, 1869.



JOHN WESLEY.

(Drawn and engraved by George Vertue.)

CHAPTER II

METHODISM IN IRELAND

(1747–1750)

IRELAND, once called *the Isle of Saints*, and for a long time the pioneer of missions for the rest of Europe, has long since fallen in the rear of her two sisters, Scotland and England, in a religious point of view. While the latter eagerly embraced the principles of the Reformation of the sixteenth century, Ireland, allowing herself to be influenced by political grievances, refused to follow the movement, and thus remained under the yoke of Rome. This religious inferiority has entailed humiliating social and political disadvantages. A race endowed with great natural gifts has been arrested in its development by the iron bands of superstition. To this source alone can we refer the long succession of calamities which have made its history one of the most melancholy on record.

A nation seldom retrieves lost opportunities, and Ireland can scarcely hope to overtake the other countries in the British Empire which were emancipated by the Reformation. The English Government has not succeeded in raising Ireland, and the efforts made by Irishmen themselves have not had a better success. The only remedy for the sufferings of Ireland, and the only means that could effectually raise her, would be the

religion of the gospel taking the place of the superstitions of the Roman Church.

It is to the honour of Wesley that he believed in the possibility of that regeneration, and set himself vigorously to labour for its achievement. Prior to his day, the attempts that had been made to convert Ireland had so much of what was merely political in their character as to bring them into contempt. The Anglican clergymen, supported by the forced contributions of the Catholics, were generally regarded as the useless functionaries of a persecuting power; and even if they had been men of great zeal and piety, their connection with the State would have considerably neutralised their influence. Wesley saw that where the clergy were thus doubly disqualified for their work, there was room for the action of his lay-preachers, and that the one might succeed though the others had failed.

He arrived at Dublin on Sunday, the 9th of August 1747, and in the afternoon of the same day was invited to occupy the pulpit of St. Mary's Church. He preached to "as gay and senseless a congregation" as he ever saw. Two days after he waited on the Archbishop of Dublin, who raised "abundance of objections." Wesley replied firmly; but he well knew that, in Ireland as in England, he would have to open a path for himself independently of the Established Church.

On this first visit he endeavoured to form a just estimate of the religious wants of Ireland. He observed that "at least ninety-nine in a hundred of the native Irish remain in the religion of their forefathers. The Protestants, whether in Dublin or elsewhere, are almost all transplanted lately from England. Nor is it any wonder," he adds, "that those who are born Papists generally live and die such, when the Protestants can find no better ways to convert them than penal laws

and Acts of Parliament."[1] His first impressions of the people were of the most favourable kind: he found them much more tractable than the English. "What a nation this is!" he exclaims; "men, women, and children all receive the word of exhortation, not only with patience but thankfulness."[2] Subsequent journeys confirmed this first impression.

Wesley had been preceded here by one of his lay-preachers, Thomas Williams, who in a few months organised a society of nearly three hundred members. According to his custom, he inquired into the spiritual state and religious experience of each individually. He also preached to large audiences, both in the chapel—formerly a Lutheran church—and in the open air. His preaching was everywhere well received; indeed, the enthusiasm of his reception was to him a matter of astonishment. After spending a fortnight in Ireland, he had to leave a people "loving beyond expression," as he says, and in doing so determined in future to pay special attention to the spiritual necessities of this neglected country.

A fortnight after his departure his brother Charles succeeded him in Ireland. He was accompanied by Charles Perronet, a son of the vicar of Shoreham. Within this brief space of time, however, a sudden revolution had taken place in the minds of the Dublin populace. The passions of the mob had broken forth and fallen with great severity upon the little society. At the instigation of the priests the chapel had been sacked by the Roman Catholics, while the pulpit and benches served to make a bonfire: many Methodists had also been insulted and threatened with worse treatment. The authorities, by refusing to interfere, became accomplices in these transactions: the grand jury dis-

[1] *Journal*, 15th August 1747. [2] *Ibid.*, 29th June 1749.

charged the rioters who were brought before them, and thus encouraged them to recommence their work, which they did not fail to do. Charles Wesley had to withstand the violent attacks of a populace whose fury led them into unheard-of excesses. More than once in these encounters blood flowed and life was wantonly sacrificed, while many were so maltreated that they died in consequence of their injuries. A policeman, in attempting to defend Charles Wesley, was trampled to death and his body dragged about the streets, and then hung up in a public place by the frenzied crowd. The murderers were brought to trial but acquitted "as usual," says Wesley. The faith and courage of that man of God survived all this opposition, and as soon as the persecution came to an end the work went forward peacefully.

It was no longer confined to Dublin: from this time brave preachers went through the length and breadth of the land, and notwithstanding its difficulties their labour was rewarded with a measure of success. Charles Wesley's fine psalmody was greatly in favour with this musical people, and frequently attracted hearers. Two characteristic anecdotes will show the effect of the Methodist melodies on the Irish mind.

At Wexford the little society, persecuted by the Papists, used to meet secretly in a barn. One of the mischievous spirits of the neighbourhood promised his companions to secrete himself in the barn before the service, and as soon as the meeting began to open the door to them. He found nothing in which to stow himself away but an old sack. As soon as the singing began, the Irishman was so struck by its power and beauty that he forgot the object for which he came, and listened to the end. The hymn finished, he listened to the prayer, and his heart, already softened, began to

melt. The poor man was smitten with remorse for his folly, his frame shook, and his groans of distress drew the attention of the people to the spot from whence they proceeded. The first thought of the rustic and untutored congregation was that some diabolical agency was at work, but a closer scrutiny discovered in the sack the unfortunate Irishman overwhelmed with distress. An explanation took place: the poor man asked the people to pray for him, and from that day gave proof of sound conversion, and continued a consistent member of the society at Wexford.[1]

About the same time a publican, a great lover of music, came to one of the services to hear the singing. Fearing the effect which the other parts of the service might have upon him, the poor fellow put his fingers in his ears as soon as the singing ceased. A fly settling on his nose compelled him to remove his hand from his ear at the very moment that the preacher was uttering the words, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." His curiosity was awakened; he determined to listen a little longer, and the truths of the gospel smote his conscience so effectually that he was led to repentance and salvation.[1]

These anecdotes show how simple and uncultivated was the class of people Methodism had to do with in Catholic Ireland. Here superstition was added to ignorance, and created obstacles which must always largely militate against the progress of the truth. Happily, beneath these prejudices there lay a generous and susceptible nature, easily accessible to the gospel when preached in its simplicity and power.

On his second visit to Ireland, which took place in March 1748, Wesley met with a most hearty reception. Arriving at Dublin, he went immediately

[1] Stevens, *History of Methodism*, vol. i. p. 277.

to the place of worship where his brother Charles was meeting the society. He began to speak, but for some moments his voice was drowned by the noise of this demonstrative people "shouting and praising God." During the three months that he spent in Ireland he traversed a great part of the country, preaching every morning at five o'clock, and in general enjoying the goodwill of the people. The storm that had burst upon the society at its birth seemed to have had no other result than to purify the atmosphere.

Wherever Wesley went he preached in the open air to attentive congregations composed of Catholics as well as Protestants. At Athlone he addressed an immense crowd from a window. The majority of them were Catholics, and their eagerness to hear the word was such as to occasion the following remarks in his *Journal*: "I scarce ever saw a better behaved or more attentive congregation. Indeed, so civil a people as the Irish in general I never saw, either in Europe or in America."[1] Two days after, the appearance of the people astonished him still more: "A great part of the congregation was in tears." "Almost all the town," he says, "appeared to be moved, full of goodwill and desires of salvation." But he was not deceived by such manifestations. "The waters," said he, "spread too wide to be deep."[2] He endeavoured to reach their conscience by confronting them with the law of God. "I preached," he says, "the terrors of the Lord in the strongest manner I was able. But still they who are ready to eat up every word do not appear to digest any part of it."[3]

Notwithstanding, he laid at Athlone the foundations of a prosperous society. At Clara, the first time he preached, he had a congregation composed partly of

[1] *Journal*, 2nd April 1748. [2] *Ibid.*, 3rd and 4th April 1748.
[3] *Ibid.*, 11th April 1748.

wealthy people, who came in their carriages.[1] On a subsequent occasion, in the same place, he successfully competed with one of the most popular national sports, a "famous cock-fight, to which almost all the country was coming from every side. . . . One or two hundred," he says, "stopped and listened awhile, and forgot their diversion."[2] At Tullamore a violent hailstorm came on while he was preaching in the open air; and not only did none go away, but the majority remained bare-headed, though Wesley bade them put on their hats.[2] At Limerick a ball had commenced in the place where he was to hold his service. Though advised to desist, he kept his ground, and one after another the dancers abandoned their pastime and joined his congregation.[3]

He frequently had priests among his hearers, but they generally declared war against him. The Athlone priest came to bring back his people from listening to the great missionary, and a considerable number of them allowed themselves, like a flock of good sheep, to be driven away to their pen.[4] The Protestants generally took his part against the priests who attacked him; and when one day a Carmelite friar interrupted him by exclaiming, "You lie! you lie!" the Protestants, zealous for the honour of their religion, put the monk to flight.[5] More than once, however, indifferent Protestants joined with the Roman Catholics in opposing the progress of this new work. On the other hand, on one occasion Wesley had the honour of being defended by a priest. This happened at one of his open-air services, when the various feelings of the crowd were naturally manifested in greater freedom. A Protestant called out, "Ay,

[1] *Journal*, 1st April 1748. [2] *Ibid.*, 12th April 1748.
[3] *Ibid.*, 15th May 1749. [4] *Ibid.*, 10th April 1748.
[5] *Ibid.*, 3rd May 1748.

he is a Jesuit; that's plain!" A priest, who was present, replied with a loud voice, "No, he is not; I would to God he was!"[1]

When Wesley quitted Ireland he left a number of societies fully organised with several preachers. His brother, who shortly afterwards assumed the superintendence of that part of the work, visited Cork, an important town in the south-west, which was to become the battle-field of Irish Methodism. His success was great at first, he had congregations amounting to ten thousand, and formed a society of two hundred members, whose religious character he complained of as being too superficial. But whatever the work may have lacked in solidity, it was about to acquire by the aid of persecution.

The people soon changed their minds, and, with true Irish versatility, passed from friendliness to fury. Charles Wesley had hardly left the town when the people rose against the Methodists, under the leadership of a travelling comedian named Butler, whose audiences had been thinned by the preaching. This mountebank preached a crusade against the Christians; he was to be seen in the streets of the city robed in clerical attire, and holding in his hand a Bible and a packet of profane songs: he assembled the idle and dissolute of every class, and vented all sorts of absurd calumnies against the preachers. Being gifted with a certain amount of loquacity, this buffoon became a noted personage in Cork, and for some time, by means of his furious declamations and unscrupulous falsehoods, gained a complete ascendency over the minds of the lower classes. Led astray by his misrepresentations, they committed unpardonable outrages. Companies of men, armed with bludgeons and swords, patrolled the city and broke into the houses of the Methodists; men, women, and children suspected

[1] *Journal*, 15th May 1748.

of belonging to the hated sect were attacked in the street by armed bands, and many of them seriously injured. The common cry in the street was, "Five pounds for the head of a swaddler!"[1]

The mayor encouraged these disorders. In vain did the persecuted people appeal to him for protection: to one of them, who complained that the rioters had plundered his house, his reply was: "It is your own fault for entertaining these preachers. If you will turn them out of your house I will engage there shall be no harm done, but if you will not turn them out you must take what you will get." This ill-timed speech, made in the presence of the mob, was like oil thrown on the flames. Butler took advantage of it to continue his seditious declamations: he publicly declared that the murder of the Methodists was a lawful and meritorious act.

The ordinary tribunals did not dare to take up the cause of the oppressed. Not only did they acquit the persecutors, but they also accused the persecuted. The city records still preserve the following remarkable presentment: "We find and present Charles Wesley to be a person of ill-fame, a vagabond, and a common disturber of His Majesty's peace, and we pray he may be transported." The Methodists appealed to a higher court, and obtained full justice from the king's judges. When Butler presented himself as the first witness in the case, to the question, "What is your calling?" he replied, "I sing ballads." "Here," exclaimed the judge, lifting up his hands indignantly,—"here are six gentlemen indicted as vagabonds, and the first accuser is a vagabond by profession!"

[1] "A name given to Mr. Cennick first by a priest who heard him speak of a child wrapped in swaddling clothes, and probably did not know the expression was in the Bible, a book he was not much acquainted with" (*Journal*, 25th May 1750).

Notwithstanding this acquittal, the reign of the mob continued; and when, in 1750, John Wesley came to Cork, he was assailed with terrible violence. The mayor, whose protection he sought, contented himself with ordering the drums of the city to be beaten in front of the chapel all the while the service lasted. This ingenious method of "keeping the peace" had the effect of assembling the multitude. After falling upon Wesley, who displayed his usual presence of mind, they attacked the chapel, "brought out all the seats and benches, tore up the floor, the door, the frames of the windows, and whatever of woodwork remained, part of which they carried off for their own use, and the rest they burned in the open street." The next day Wesley had the honour of being burnt in effigy in the streets of Cork.

From this time the scandalous scenes which disgraced the city two years before were daily repeated. Not a day passed without fresh attacks on persons or property. "One Roger O'Ferrall fixed up an advertisement at the public Exchange, that he was ready to head any mob in order to pull down any house that should dare to harbour a swaddler."

The mayor made use of a singular device by means of which he seemed to discharge his duty, but in reality abandoned the Methodists to the ill-will of the mob. One day, his help being solicited, he came to the scene of tumult with a party of soldiers, and said to the mob: "Lads, once, twice, thrice,—I bid you go home; now I have done." He then went back, taking the soldiers with him, while the people were only too well satisfied with the ill-disguised encouragement thus given them by the first magistrate of the city.[1]

At Bandon, a neighbouring town, a drunken clergyman came with a company of "lewd fellows of the baser sort"

[1] *Journal*, 22nd May 1750.

to interrupt the preaching. "After I spoke," Wesley says, "about a quarter of an hour, a clergyman, who had planted himself near me with a very large stick in his hand, according to agreement, opened the scene. . . . But, before he had uttered many words, two or three resolute women, by main strength, pulled him into a house, and, after expostulating a little, sent him away through the garden." Wesley even adds in his *Journal* that one of those sturdy Irish women had to "cuff him soundly" in order to make him keep quiet.[1]

The agitation which had prevailed so long at Cork gradually decreased and disappeared before the firmness of Christians whom tribulation had only fortified. A good number of the soldiers of the garrison frequented the services; several of them were converted, and their presence at the meetings tended to keep evil-disposed persons in awe.

Well tempered by persecution, Methodism achieved much success in Cork, where it flourishes still. In subsequent visits Wesley found the dispositions of the people greatly changed towards him: he was received at the town hall by the mayor in person. So rapidly, indeed, did Methodism gain ground in Cork among the best people of the place, that, only five years after the persecution we have been narrating, Wesley dreaded lest this city might become a Capua where his preachers would be in danger of being enervated.

Similar progress was made simultaneously at many points all over Ireland. Not only the southern counties, but also the mountainous districts of Ulster were evangelised by devoted missionaries, whose zeal made light of hardship and danger. They gave their best service to the best of causes. The history of early Methodism in Ireland is full of acts of heroism, which

[1] *Journal*, 26th May 1750.

show to what a pitch of disinterested zeal the soul may be elevated under the influence of a lively faith. One of the first leaders in this holy enterprise well-nigh fell a martyr to his Christian devotedness: his name was Macburney, and he suffered for months in consequence of the blows he received from a mob who resented his faithful preaching. "May God forgive you; I do!" was his prayer, uttered on their behalf while they were trampling him under their feet.[1]

In preaching to Irish Catholics, Wesley's preachers, like himself, had wisdom enough to avoid controversy respecting Romanist errors, and to confine themselves mainly to the leading truths of the gospel. Striving thus to arouse the voice of conscience rather than to combat the prejudices of education, they succeeded in leading many Roman Catholics to Christ.

One of the converts, Thomas Walsh, became the apostle of Methodism in his own country. "His life," says Southey, "proved to the Catholics that there were other saints besides their own." The success which attended his ministry was due to his holy living and to the charm of his kind disposition. Being himself an Irishman, he was able to preach in the idiom of the country, and to adapt his ministrations to the national temperament. While his success was great, his trials were, if possible, greater: the priests vowed vengeance against him, and roused the passions of the people by the denunciations which they hurled at this holy man of God: his life was often in jeopardy. His name remains indissolubly connected with the foundation of Methodism in Ireland.

[1] *Journal*, 24th May 1773.

CHAPTER III

PROGRESS AND DIFFICULTIES

(1748–1754)

In the period which this chapter covers, Methodism and its founder met with difficulties of every kind. It is a necessary condition for works which are to last, that they should grow amidst incessant struggle; and it is the characteristic of great individualities that they get stronger by passing through adverse circumstances.

About this time a certain number of the Anglican clergy manifested sympathy towards Wesley, by opening to him their pulpits and associating, more or less fully, with his work. We have already mentioned a few who were present at his first Conference. Some others embraced also the interests of the Revival. Richard Bateman, the rector of St. Bartholomew-the-Great, in London, invited him to preach in his church. For the first time after eight years Wesley reappeared in the Church pulpits of the metropolis, and crowds went to hear him. Bishop Gibson, to whom some people complained about what they called "a scandal," answered: "And what would you have me do? I have no right to hinder him. Mr. Wesley is a clergyman, regularly ordained, and under no ecclesiastical censure." [1]

Thompson, the rector of St. Gennis, Cornwall, was

[1] *Works*, vol. xiii. p. 145.

also one of the best friends of Methodist preachers. He had been for many years one of those country parsons, so numerous at that time, who associated in the sports of the neighbouring gentry, and took very small concern for their flock; but he was converted through a dream that awakened his conscience, and he declared himself for the Methodists, to whom he opened both his house and his church. All the clergy of that diocese were up in arms against him, and his bishop, the fiery Lavington, on one occasion threatened to unfrock him if he continued to associate with Wesley. Thompson stripped off his robe and threw it at the prelate's feet, saying, "I can preach without a gown."

A still more useful fellow-labourer did Wesley find in Vincent Perronet,[1] vicar of Shoreham, in Kent, who became his friend and adviser. Although he did not leave his parish, he was a Methodist by his convictions and in his heart: he even published several pamphlets in defence of the Revival. In moments of trouble the brothers Wesley used to go to him for encouragement and counsel. Charles called him his archbishop. His two sons, Edward and Charles, inherited his affection for Methodism, and preferred the hardships and perils of itinerancy rather than the honours and advantages of the Church.[2]

William Grimshaw, incumbent of Haworth, in Yorkshire, was still more closely connected with the work of

[1] The Perronet family had come from Château-d'Oex, in the Canton de Vaud, Switzerland.

[2] Edward Perronet was even one of the leaders in the anti-Anglican movement which took place a few years later, and which came near separating the two brothers Wesley, and breaking up the societies. In 1756 he published a metrical satire called "The Mitre," in which the Church of England was cleverly attacked. This poem, a volume of 279 pages, is now very scarce, because it was suppressed, all but a few copies, at the request of John Wesley.

the Revival. Retaining the charge of his parish, he became one of Wesley's auxiliaries, and took the direction of two of his circuits. He bore the hardships of that life with as much spirit and courage as the boldest of the lay-preachers; sleeping, when necessary, in a barn or a loft, often subsisting on coarse bread, and always wearing common clothes, that he might be able to give the more to the poor. Gifted as he was with a robust intellect, being also a graduate of Cambridge University, he might have shone as a preacher; but he preferred aiming at simplicity and using a familiar style in his discourses, in order to reach the minds of his country hearers: his sermons were plain talks, without any affectation, although perhaps now and then a little too eccentric. The brothers Wesley, and Whitefield, used to preach in his church, and the lay-helpers in his kitchen; he accompanied them all in their missionary rounds, and shared in the persecutions they endured. Grimshaw died on the 7th of April 1762, after a blessed and memorable ministry. One of his last words was: "I am as happy as I can be on earth, and as sure of glory as if I were in it." The memory of William Grimshaw is still fragrant in the district of Yorkshire where he spent his life.

The ministers of the Church of England who showed any sympathy to the Methodist work had to take their share of the hatred and opprobrium which fell upon it. Charles Manning, the vicar of Hayes, in Middlesex, having been friendly to Wesley, and having offered him his pulpit, was ostracised by his colleagues, who henceforth did not salute him but turned their backs upon him. His own parishioners followed the example set by his colleagues, and behaved in the most unseemly manner during his services. One day some of them went up the steeple and set the bells ringing, in order to drown his voice.

Milner, the vicar of Chipping, a village in Lancashire, had to bear the same contumely for having accepted the doctrines of the Revival, and introduced Wesley into his church. A set of noisy fellows once invaded the sacred building for the purpose of preventing Wesley from preaching. One of them stopped him at the foot of the pulpit stairs, and said, "You shan't go up!" Then, with the help of his comrades, he violently pushed him out of the church. Milner was summoned by his bishop to answer for causing disorders in his parish. The valiant minister replied that, if disorder existed somewhere, it was among the clergymen of Lancashire; not one of whom, as far as he knew, preached the Protestant doctrine of salvation by faith.

The English Episcopate was at that time almost unanimous against Methodism. Lavington, the Bishop of Exeter, sadly distinguished himself by the extreme violence of his attacks. A fictitious charge appeared under his name in 1748, in which his well-known hatred for Methodism was expressed, no doubt with some exaggeration. The bishop, without having any proof of the fact, accused Whitefield and Wesley of having forged that pamphlet. They protested that they had no hand in it; but Lady Huntingdon had to interfere and open a formal inquest before he would withdraw his accusation. In a statement which was made public, he had to make an apology "to Messrs. Whitefield and Wesley for the harsh and unjust censures which he has passed upon them," and to express "the wish that they would accept his unfeigned regret for having unjustly wounded their feelings and exposed them to the odium of the world."[1]

This unfortunate affair made of that harsh opponent an implacable enemy. Two years after he began

[1] *Life and Times of Lady Huntingdon*, vol. i. p. 96.

publishing his famous book, *Enthusiasm of the Methodists and Papists compared*, which appeared in three parts, the first two in 1749 and the last in 1751. As is sufficiently apparent from the title, the Bishop of Exeter took up the popular charge of leaning towards Popery, which had from the first been directed against Methodism. He aimed at proving that "the Methodists are doing the Papists' work for them, and agree with them in some of their principles; that their heads are filled with much the same grand projects, and that they are driven on in the same wild manner." Bishop Lavington sustained this charge, not by serious arguments but with offensive personal remarks and absurd calumnies.

Wesley, Whitefield, and Perronet, all three wrote answers. Whitefield wrote to Lady Huntingdon: "I have seen the bishop's second pamphlet, in which he has served the Methodists as the Bishop of Constance served John Huss, when he ordered some painted devils to be put round his head before he burnt him."

Wesley's answer [1] effectually disposed of the accusations contained in the bishop's book, and took but slight notice of the insults. Wesley gave in full the facts and the quotations, which had been distorted or mutilated by the bishop. He took the opportunity of reading him a short lecture on courtesy, and even on grammar: he met his anger with reason sharpened by irony. "You proceed," says he, "to prove my enthusiasm from my notions of conversion. And here great allowances are to be made, because you are talking of things quite out of your sphere: you are got into an unknown world. . . . Do you know what conversion is? 'Yes, it is to start up perfect men at once.' 'Indeed, sir, it is not. A man is

[1] *A Letter to the Author of the "Enthusiasm,"* etc., 1750. A *Second Letter* appeared in 1752.

usually converted long before he is a perfect man. It is probable most of those Ephesians to whom St. Paul directed his Epistle were converted. Yet they were not "come"' (few, if any) 'to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' I do not, sir, indeed, I do not, undertake to make you understand these things. I am not so vain as to think it is in my power. It is the utmost of my hope to convince you, or at least those who read your works, that you understand just nothing about them."[1]

The bishop had issued his accusations anonymously; but Wesley, at the conclusion of his reply, called upon him to show his face openly. "So that now," writes he, "any scribbler, with a middling share of low wit, not encumbered with good nature or modesty, may raise a laugh on those whom he cannot confute, and run them down whom he dares not look in the face. By this means even a comparer of Methodists and Papists may blaspheme the great work of God, not only without blame but with applause; at least, from readers of his own stamp. But it is high time, sir, you should leave your skulking place. Come out, and let us look each other in the face. I have little leisure, and less inclination, for controversy. Yet I promise, if you will set your name to your third part, I will answer all that shall concern me, in that, as well as the preceding."[2]

"I began," says Wesley in his *Journal*, "writing a letter to the Comparer of Papists and Methodists. Heavy work, such as I should never choose; but sometimes it must be done. Well might the ancient say, 'God made practical divinity necessary, the devil controversial.' But it is necessary: we must 'resist the devil,' or he will not 'flee from us.'"[3]

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. ix. p. 8. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 13.
[3] *Journal*, 19th November 1751.

That controversy went on for some time; on the part of Wesley, it was always calm and firm, sometimes attaining to eloquence; but on the side of Lavington, it was seasoned with rudeness and insults, and often savoured of dishonesty. At last the latter shamefully disappeared from the lists, whereto he had first defiantly called the founder of Methodism.[1] In the eyes of every candid observer, the true issue of that debate could not be mistaken. But something always remains of the inventions of calumny, and the perfidious insinuations of the bishop, who charged Methodism with being Popery in disguise, did not fall to the ground.[2]

Wesley, however, amidst such opprobrium and insults, found a real comfort in the work he had begun. His journals show that he continued to scour the country in all directions throughout the period embraced by this chapter. It is impossible to follow him through these incessant missionary tours; it will suffice to cull a few facts in passing, and to take a rapid survey of the whole.

Cornwall continued to be one of the most interesting sections of Wesley's vast diocese, and one which claimed a large proportion of his labours. St. Just could boast the largest society in the west of England, and "the liveliest in England." At Falmouth, Camelford, and many other places, those who had been persecutors had almost to a man become devoted adherents, and some of

[1] An inscription on marble in Exeter Cathedral glorifies that warlike bishop, by saying that "unaffected sanctity dignified his instructions, and indulgent candour sweetened his government."

[2] "A worthy justice of the peace (doubtless to quiet the mob of Liverpool) had just caused to be cried about the streets, stuck up in public places, and even thrown into many houses, part of the 'Comparison between the Papists and Methodists.' Perhaps this might be the occasion of some bitter curses which were given us as soon as we entered the gates" (*Journal*, 25th April 1752).

them sound converts; among the rest, the man who had been the means of imprisoning Thomas Maxfield. At Breage, the clergyman who had circulated slanderous reports against Wesley and his people had committed suicide, and the populace, regarding the event as in some sort a divine judgment, had begun to entertain different feelings toward the Methodists. The latter also reckoned among them many gifted and zealous preachers, both itinerant and local. One of these, a brazier by trade, astonished Wesley by his oratorical ability: he said of him that "he could preach *ex-tempore* sermons which were quite equal to the written discourses of some learned men."

Scotland, which Wesley visited for the first time in 1751, gave him small encouragement. Whitefield had warned him that his Arminian principles would not be relished by the Scotch people, to which Wesley replied, that he should "preach Christianity, not Arminianism." His congregations were everywhere numerous and very attentive, but very cold. On his second visit he preached in the pulpits of the Presbyterian Church to large audiences: everywhere he was treated with great respect, although with a degree of reserve which almost led him to express a preference for the hootings and stone-throwing of an English or Irish mob. These visits resulted in the formation of a few small societies, but were not marked by those widespread and powerful movements which usually attended his ministry. This want of success was probably due in part to the peculiarities of the Scotch character, but still more to the more advanced spiritual state of the country, which made the necessity for a religious revival to be less felt there than in England.

In England itself, the state of affairs contrasted

strongly with that which we have already described as distinguishing the period prior to the Revival; and Wesley could say, even at so early a date as 1750, that from London to Newcastle the work was in full prosperity.

At Birmingham, where hitherto there had been more occasion for sorrow than rejoicing, he found immense congregations, far beyond the capacity of the chapel, thirsting for the Word of Life. "Oh, how is the scene changed here!" says he. "The last time I preached at Birmingham, the stones flew on every side. If any disturbance were made now, the disturber would be in more danger than the preacher."[1]

At Wednesbury and Darlaston, those strongholds of opposition in Staffordshire, he observed that the principal part of the ancient persecutors had been overtaken by surprising judgments from God, while those who survived "were now," says Wesley, "as lambs."[2] In the former of these towns he preached in the midst of heavy rain to an attentive congregation, not one of whom stirred till the end of the service. A new and large chapel was soon built here, and Wednesbury became one of the strongest centres of Methodism.

In 1752, Wesley preached in the church at Wakefield, and could not but draw a contrast between his present position and that which he had occupied four years before in the same town, when the most religious of the inhabitants did not dare to permit him to preach in their houses, for fear the latter should be demolished by the crowd.[3]

In his native town of Epworth, Wesley had the joy of seeing the work of God prosper. The man who, a few years before, had been repulsed from the Lord's Table, was now admitted to it; and when he preached abroad,

[1] *Journal*, 31st March 1751. [2] *Ibid.*, 2nd April 1751.
[3] *Ibid.*, 12th April 1752.

he had almost the whole population for his hearers. "I see plainly," he says, "we have often judged amiss, when we have measured the increase of the work of God, in this and other places, by the increase of the society only. The society here is not large; but God has wrought upon the whole place. Sabbath-breaking and drunkenness are no more seen in these streets; cursing and swearing are rarely heard. Wickedness hides its head already. Who knows but, by and by, God may utterly take it away?"[1]

We must not suppose, however, that opposition had died everywhere. It not only arose wherever Wesley's preachers first appeared, but frequently revived in places where it had ceased for some time. Wesley often succeeded in gaining the upper hand through the influence of those on whom his preaching had produced beneficial effects. By degrees respectable people, who had only been misled by false reports into taking part with the rioters, were restored to a sense of propriety and a peaceable temper, and thus served as a rallying-point to the missionary. The unruly ones often found antagonists in those on whose support they had confidently reckoned. The time was drawing near when former opponents, wearied out if not quite vanquished, would quietly range themselves among his hearers. The irresolution, also, of the mob frequently betrayed itself in such a way as to lead to an easy victory. After visiting the public-houses of the neighbourhood, they would set out with drums beating and bold faces, promising themselves that this time they would make such an example of the preacher that he would never wish to set foot again in that part of the country. Wesley would advance to meet them, shake hands with the leaders of the mob, speak a few kind words to them,

[1] *Journal*, 3rd July 1748.

and finally ask them to join his congregation, which they not unfrequently did, so well pleased were they to receive a welcome. Sometimes he contented himself with sending one of his friends, not even doing them the honour of interrupting the service on their account. Such was the case on one occasion at Reading, and the plan was quite successful. A large number of bargemen had assembled to interrupt the preaching. One of the friends, a Mr. Richards, came up and accosted them, and asked "if they would go with him and hear a good sermon, telling them, 'I would make room for you if you were as many more.' They said they would go with all their hearts. 'But, neighbours,' said he, 'would it not be as well to leave those clubs behind you? Perhaps some of the women may be frighted at them?' They threw them all away," and came quietly to the preaching. At the end of the sermon their captain, who was a head taller than his fellows, rose, and, looking round upon the congregation, said, "The gentleman says nothing but what is good: I say so; and there is not a man here that shall dare to say otherwise."[1]

The populace were not always, however, so easily subdued. In many places their malevolence continued unabated, especially where it was fostered by the civil or religious authorities, who persevered in opposing the agents of the revival work. More than once, indeed, the justices of the peace forgot their essential duty, and publicly encouraged disorders. Once Wesley saw one coming towards him at the head of the mob and preceded by a drum. In other places it was the parson who prompted the disturbers, and made them drunk, that they might the better fulfil their task. One clergyman took the trouble of getting up a noisy demonstration,

[1] *Journal*, 2nd November 1747.

"by providing the mob with horns and other things convenient to prevent the congregation's hearing."[1] Such incitements did not fail to produce their effects, and often the preacher was assailed with all sorts of missiles; not unfrequently he was chased, or besieged in the houses where he had been entertained. In such cases it required all the coolness and courage of a man to meet the opponents. At Shepton, in 1748, the mob, assembled by the beating of a drum, surrounded the house at which Wesley was staying, and broke all the windows. One of the ringleaders succeeded in effecting an entrance, but being separated from his friends, his courage failed, and he did not know what to do. A stone thrown from without struck him on his forehead, and inflicted a severe wound, whereupon he became exceedingly alarmed, and kept as close as possible to Wesley, saying, "Oh, sir, are we to die to-night? What must I do? What must I do?" "Pray to God," was the reply; "He is able to deliver you from all danger." The poor fellow took this advice, and began praying as he had certainly never prayed before. While the mob were busy considering how to set the house on fire, Wesley succeeded in making his escape by a back door.[2]

But in that same year it was chiefly in Yorkshire that John Wesley had to meet exasperated mobs. At Halifax Cross he tried to preach to "an immense number of people, roaring like the waves of the sea." There he saw a gentleman "throwing money among the people, which occasioned much hurry and confusion." He had to leave the place and adjourn to a neighbouring meadow, where he was followed by most of the hearers, and there, he says, "we spent so solemn an hour as I have seldom known, rejoicing and praising God."[3]

[1] *Journal*, 10th September 1753. [2] *Ibid.*, 12th February 1748.
[3] *Ibid.*, 22nd August 1753.

After visiting Grimshaw, and preaching for him in the parish church of Haworth at five in the morning, Wesley went with him to a village called Roughlee. Whilst he was preaching there in the open air, "a drunken rabble came, with clubs and staves," and with a constable as their leader. They scattered the assembly, and seized Wesley in order to bring him before the justice of the peace. The magistrate wanted to extort from him a promise that he would come to Roughlee no more. But Wesley declared that he would sooner cut off his hand than make any such promise. After being kept there for more than two hours he was dismissed; but the mob, under the very eyes of the magistrate, again seized the preacher, and inflicted on him all sorts of insults, and some severe blows which brought him to the ground. His companions had no better fate. One of them was dragged by the hair; another was hurried into the river; several more were wounded by stones.[1] The prompter of this persecution was a certain White, formerly a Roman Catholic priest, who was now the curate of Colne. A few days before he had issued a kind of proclamation, calling for volunteers to come and defend the Church, with promise that everyone should receive "a pint of ale for advance, and other proper encouragements."[2] He had also preached a slanderous sermon against Methodists, which he had the impudence to publish with a dedication to the Archbishop of Canterbury. Grimshaw, in a bold pamphlet, gave this miserable priest his due, and cleared his oppressed friends. White ruined himself by various excesses, and finally died in Chester Castle, where he had been imprisoned for debt. Wesley said of him: "He drank himself first into a jail, and then into his grave."[3]

[1] *Journal*, 25th August 1748. [2] Myles, *Life of Grimshaw*, p. 114.
[3] Wesley's *Works*, vol. ii. p. 253.

In the following year disorders, already mentioned in the preceding chapter, took place at Cork in Ireland. They were the occasion of several pamphlets written by Wesley: *A short Address to the Inhabitants of Ireland; A Letter to a Roman Catholic; A Roman Catechism, with a Reply thereto*, etc.

In Lancashire he met the same hostile feelings as before. He was not able to preach in the open air at Rochdale, the streets teeming with a population enraged against him. From thence he went with a few friends to Bolton. "We had no sooner entered the main street," he says, "than we perceived the lions at Rochdale were lambs in comparison of those at Bolton. Such rage and bitterness I scarce ever saw before in any creatures that bore the form of men. They followed us in full cry to the house where we went; and as soon as we were gone in, took possession of all the avenues to it, and filled the street from one end to the other. . . . But they did not design to carry on the attack at a distance: presently one ran up and told us the mob had burst into the house. . . . Believing the time was now come, I walked down into the thickest of them. They had now filled all the rooms below. I called for a chair. The winds were hushed, and all was calm and still. My heart was filled with love, my eyes with tears, and my mouth with arguments. They were amazed, they were ashamed, they were melted down, they devoured every word. What a turn was this! Oh, how did God change the counsel of the old Ahithophel into foolishness, and bring all the drunkards, swearers, Sabbath-breakers, and mere sinners in the place to hear of His plenteous redemption!"[1]

In 1750, Wesley, for the first time, visited the archiepiscopal city of Canterbury: a society had

[1] *Journal*, 18th October 1749.

already been formed there. For three days in succession he preached in the Butter Market, and at other places. One of the clergymen published a bitter pamphlet against him with this title, "The Imposter Detected: or, the Counterfeit Saint turned inside out. Containing a full Discovery of the Horrid Blasphemies and Impieties, taught by those Diabolical Seducers called Methodists, under colour of the only real Christianity. Particularly intended for the use of the City of Canterbury, where that Mystery of Iniquity has lately begun to work. By John Kirkby, rector of Blackmanstone, in Kent." Such a title as this is sufficient to spare us the trouble of describing the way in which Methodists were treated in Canterbury. The mob, encouraged here, as elsewhere, by those who ought to have kept it in good order, committed great excesses, which, however, were soon stopped by the authorities.

Except in Ireland, there was no persecution in the course of this year. For we will not give that name to some attempts at disturbing or frightening the hearers, and which did not move Wesley. As he was going to preach at Shaftesbury, a policeman came and told him, "Sir, the mayor discharges you from preaching in this borough any more." Wesley replied: "While King George gives me leave to preach, I shall not ask leave of the mayor of Shaftesbury."[1]

In the following year, Wesley, who had recently been married, took a journey into the West, where he was well received, except at Tiverton. In that place the Methodists were cruelly persecuted, and were nicknamed Maccabees,—"with some propriety," says Punshon, "considering their sufferings and their valour."[2] Whilst Wesley was preaching there, a crowd came with drums

[1] *Journal*, 3rd September 1750. [2] Punshon, *Wesley and his Time*.

and fifes, for the purpose of breaking up the meeting. A poor chimney-sweeper, whom they took as a hostage, was so ill-treated that he was near dying of it. The mayor declined to interfere on behalf of Methodists, and these are the peculiar reasons he gave in explanation of his conduct. "There is the old church and the new church; that is one religion. Then there is Parson K—'s at the Pitt meeting, and Parson W—'s in Peter Street, and old Parson T—'s at the meeting in Newport Street,—four ways of going to heaven already; enough in conscience; and if the people won't go to heaven by one or other of these ways, they shan't go to heaven at all herefrom, while I am mayor of Tiverton." [1]

When, in 1752, Methodism was introduced at Hull, a town which afterwards became an important centre of the Revival movement in Yorkshire, it was not without a sharp struggle. On Wesley's first visit there was a general unloosing of the evil passions of the crowd. Whilst he was preaching in the open air, clods of earth and stones were showered about him. When he had done, the mob followed him with hootings and volleys of stones till he reached his lodgings. A few years after the feeling was completely changed, and he had the most cordial reception among the people.[2]

At Chester he succeeded in keeping the crowd quiet. But, four days after he had left the town, they assailed the chapel and pulled it down, under the eyes of the mayor and with his approval. When Wesley came back in the following year, the disposition of the people was different. The new mayor, who was as firm as his predecessor had been timid, had succeeded in re-establishing order.[3] The preaching of the gospel did the rest, and when, in 1759, Wesley passed that way at

[1] *Methodist Magazine*, 1819, p. 544. [2] *Journal*, 24th April 1752.
[3] *Ibid.*, 20th June 1752; 27th March 1753.

the time of the annual races, he engaged in a successful competition, and secured a numerous and well-behaved audience.[1]

At Charlton the opposition had been of a different kind, but here, too, it was conquered. All the farmers of the neighbourhood, alarmed at the progress of Methodism, entered into a mutual engagement not to employ any one belonging to "that way." This arrangement was defeated in the best possible manner. One of the promoters of the scheme was himself, not long after, convinced by the truth, and opened his house to the preachers. He invited his friends and their servants to the meetings. "So," says Wesley, "the whole device of Satan fell to the ground, and the Word of God grew and prevailed."[2]

At the beginning of the year 1750 (8th February and 8th March) the south of England experienced repeated shocks of earthquake, which, following in quick succession, greatly alarmed the people. The inhabitants of London forsook their dwellings, and camped in multitudes upon the squares and in the parks. Whitefield and the Wesleys improved the opportunity, and in the midst of the panic preached repentance to the crowds.[3]

Charles, whose poetical genius always revived under the influence of extraordinary circumstances, published at that moment nineteen hymns, which express the peace and trust of a soul that cannot be disturbed by the awful phenomena of nature. On the whole, it is evident that the earthquake of 1750, by shaking the

[1] *Journal*, 2nd May 1759. [2] *Ibid.*, 9th September 1754.

[3] Sherlock, the Bishop of London, published at that time a letter addressed "To the Clergy and People of London and Westminster, on occasion of the late Earthquakes." This writing, of which 60,000 copies were sold to eager readers, aimed at making the English nation sensible of its sins, and it shows a truly lamentable picture of the moral state of the people. See Tyerman, vol. ii. p. 72.

hearts of many, must have furthered the work of evangelisation.

In 1753 Wesley preached, in the prison of Bristol, to some colliers who had been arrested for participating in a riot, and he found them quite willing to receive the comforting message of religion. A few months before he had also visited the Marshalsea Prison in London, and describes it as "a nursery of all manner of wickedness."[1]

The misery which existed in London, and which he observed very closely in visiting, filled him with an immense compassion. "Such scenes," he writes,—"who could see unmoved? There are none such to be found in a pagan country. If any of the Indians in Georgia were sick (which, indeed, exceedingly rarely happened till they learned gluttony and drunkenness from the Christians), those that were near him gave him whatever he wanted. Oh! who will convert the English into honest heathens? On Friday and Saturday I visited as many more as I could. I found some in their cells under ground; others in their garrets, half starved both with cold and hunger, added to weakness and pain. But I found not one of them unemployed who was able to crawl about the room. So wickedly, devilishly false is that common objection, 'they are poor, only because they are idle.' If you saw these things with your own eyes, could you lay out money in ornaments or superfluities?"[2]

If, on the whole, Methodism was gaining ground, there were also some less pleasing features. Wesley had to practise a watchful discipline, in order not to allow his societies to be invaded by doctrinal errors and by a lax morality. He was fond of repeating that saying of an ancient author, "The soul and the body make a man; the spirit and discipline make a Christian."

[1] *Journal*, 3rd February 1753. [2] *Ibid.*, 8th February 1753.

Along the coast, especially in Cornwall, smuggling was considered perfectly lawful, and Wesley discovered with intense grief that most of the members in St. Ives and in the neighbouring country were selling and buying contraband goods. "I told them plain," says he, "either they must put this abomination away or they would see my face no more."[1] By pointing out to his hearers the real character of these offences, and rigidly excluding from his societies all who were addicted to them, Wesley did more for the suppression of such abuses than either the police or the customs, who generally failed in their efforts.

Antinomian teachers, both of the Moravian and of the Calvinistic schools, still disturbed several of the societies. The Staffordshire societies most suffered from their influence. "What a work," he writes, "would have been in all these parts, if it had not been for doubtful disputations! If the Predestinarians had not thrown back those who began to run well, partly into the world, partly to the Baptists, and partly into endless disputes concerning the secret counsels of God! While we carried our lives in our hands, none of these came near,—the waves ran too high for them; but when all was calm, they poured in on every side, and bereaved us of our children."[2]

These ultra-Calvinists professedly followed Whitefield, but they carried his doctrine to unwarrantable lengths, and deduced from it practical consequences which he would have indignantly condemned. The two Wesleys, though quite opposed to the Calvinistic views of their friend, were tenderly attached to him. They exchanged pulpits with him, and frequently visited each other.

In 1749 Charles Wesley wrote as follows:—

"The Lord is reviving His work as at the beginning. Multitudes are daily added to His Church. George

[1] *Journal*, 25th July 1753. [2] *Ibid.*, 1st April 1751.

Whitefield, my brother, and I, are one; a threefold cord which shall no more be broken. The week before last I waited on our friend George at our house in Newcastle, and gave him full possession of our pulpit and people's hearts; as full as was in my power to give. The Lord united all our hearts. I attended his successful ministry for some days. He was never more blessed, or better satisfied. Whole troops of the Dissenters he mowed down. They also are so reconciled to us, as you cannot conceive. The world is confounded. The hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. At Leeds we met my brother, who gave honest George the right hand of fellowship, and attended him everywhere to our societies. Some at London will be alarmed at the news; but it is the Lord's doing, as they will by and by acknowledge."[1]

If Wesley's lay-preachers were precious auxiliaries, they nevertheless gave him at times a good deal of care. Generally speaking, their piety and zeal were worthy of admiration; but, owing to an insufficient degree of culture, they too easily allowed themselves to be carried away by religious novelties. One of them, James Wheatley, having embraced Antinomian principles, and being gifted with a great fluency of speech, was very popular, and became a leader among his colleagues. He was expelled for immoral conduct in 1751, but succeeded in gathering at Norwich a numerous church, which bore a fierce persecution bravely, but was utterly scattered in consequence of a new scandal which Wheatley committed. Those events brought the brothers Wesley to make a searching inquest concerning their helpers, who were now sixty-eight in number. The result was a useful sifting of the little band, which could not have accomplished anything if it had not thus been put strongly under discipline.

[1] *Methodist Magazine*, 1848, p. 639.



JOHN WESLEY.

(*Painted by Robert Hunter.*)

In 1748 Wesley founded the famous Kingswood School, a kind of boarding-school, where at first were admitted, at a very low rate of remuneration, all boys sent there, but which at a later period was reserved for the preachers' sons. The programme of studies included all the elements of a liberal education. Wesley drew it up very carefully, and watched its application even to the smallest details. As he did not feel satisfied with the class-books used at that time, he himself prepared grammars and handbooks, and also new editions of classical authors scrupulously expurgated. Unfortunately, he tried to establish in Kingswood School regulations that savoured of military discipline, and even of the monastic rule, and which did not take into consideration the age and different aptitudes of the pupils. Although he had been proficient as a teacher, he turned out to be a poor educator. His school, with its Spartan régime, struggled for a long while and disappointed him sorely; it escaped complete failure only by breaking open the iron coat-of-mail, which the ultra-logical mind of its founder had put upon it.

In the course of the seven years which are reviewed in this chapter, Wesley made a further and more extensive use of the printing-press. His largest enterprise in that line was "The Christian Library," a collection of various books of practical theology which he himself abridged: it was begun in 1749 and finished in 1755; it evidently cost him a great amount of labour and very extensive reading. The aim of this publication was to bring within the reach of the members of his societies a good choice of edifying books; and the aim was certainly fulfilled.

It was found necessary, in order to circulate the numerous publications which Wesley's fertile pen every year brought forth, to create a new organisation. In

1753 the stewards of the London Society undertook to manage the sending of the books to the societies and the receiving of the money. Thus was originated the "Book-Room," which at a later period became so important a concern.

It is time we should give some account of Wesley's marriage, which took place in 1751. Two years before, his brother Charles had become united to a wife who made for him the quiet and happy home he so well deserved to have. As to John, he had long thought that the itinerant character of his ministry was hardly compatible with the duties of the head of a family. Celibacy was attractive for him, and in a pamphlet, entitled *Thoughts on a Single Life*,[1] he had, in following the examples of Jesus Christ and of St. Paul, recommended it to all those who could devote themselves to it "for the kingdom of heaven's sake." His opinions on this subject underwent some modifications, and in course of time he was led to seek a companion for life who could provide for him a home where he would find rest after his long journeys. His thoughts first turned towards a young widow of Newcastle, called Grace Murray, who was the matron of his orphanage in that town: she was very intelligent and very pious, and took a zealous part in all Christian work. Wesley became deeply attached to her, and his affection was reciprocated. To all appearances the union was destined to take place, and Wesley, trusting to the promise given to him by the young woman, had set on another journey. Suddenly he received news that Grace Murray had renounced the idea of being married to him, and that, in order to make

[1] In 1743 Wesley published a tract with the title, *Thoughts on Marriage and a Single Life*. But at a later period he substituted another, called *Thoughts on a Single Life*, which is to be found in his complete works, vol. xi. pp. 156–463.

the step she had taken final and irrevocable, she had promised her hand to one of the preachers, John Bennet, who had in time past aspired to it. It was a severe blow for Wesley, and he felt it the more when he heard that it was his brother Charles, and some friends of his, who had brought about that unexpected conclusion of the affair. Their excuse for such an interference was, that they judged the choice to be unwise and very likely to weaken John Wesley's great influence over the societies.

The fond fancy of Wesley's biographers has bestowed upon the woman who came so near being his wife all the virtues and accomplishments which his real wife did not possess. We shall not follow them in their conjectures, neither shall we endorse the severe view which Mr. Tyerman takes of Grace Murray's character. But we must note the fact, that Wesley's friends, by preventing this marriage, helped to make another which is among the most unfortunate history has recorded.[1]

Perronet, his counsellor and friend, introduced him, in 1751, to a Mrs. Vazeille, a widow lady of some means, who appeared to possess all qualifications requisite for a minister's wife. Wesley was wrong in blindly following his friend's advice, and in not taking time to examine the case for himself. As though he were afraid that this scheme should also be interfered with, he precipitately concluded the arrangement, so that his marriage took place a fortnight after he had decided upon it. By this step he was, however, far from intending to circumscribe his sphere of labour. Hence, in the arrangements preceding the marriage, he expressly refused to have any control over his wife's fortune, and also stipulated that

[1] [Documents are now known to be in existence which if published would, it is believed, more than justify Dr. Lelièvre's refusal to accept Tyerman's conclusions with reference to this episode.—Ed.]

he should not be obliged to preach one sermon or to travel one mile less than he had been accustomed to do. "If I thought it would be otherwise," said Wesley to the lady herself, "much as I love you, I would see your face no more."[1]

Unhappily, in giving her consent to this arrangement, Mrs. Wesley promised more than she was able to perform, and experience showed her husband that he had committed an irreparable error. All her good qualities were, in fact, neutralised by one great fault, namely, jealousy. Incapable of comprehending the loftiness and purity of her husband's spirit and aims, she allowed herself to be misled by her imagination into the most absurd and outrageous suspicions. Finding that she could not induce him to adopt a sedentary life, which he would have deemed a flagrant violation of his special mission, she gave free course to her evil temper and her evil thoughts. Under the dominion of this unworthy passion, she sometimes travelled a distance of a hundred miles in order to watch him as he entered a town, and to see who was travelling with him. She opened his letters, searched his private papers, and sometimes handed them over to his enemies, in the hope of affixing some stigma upon his character. She even laid hands violently on him,—at least, if we believe the report of John Hampson, a preacher who, having unexpectedly entered a room where they were, found that woman in a state of frenzy, and with a handful of hair she had plucked from Wesley's head.[2]

This monomania so blinded the unfortunate creature that, more than once, she left her husband's roof, and only returned at his earnest solicitation. Here is a letter Wesley wrote to her during one of those fugues

[1] Moore, *Life of Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 173.
[2] Hampson, *Life of Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 127.

"God has used many means to curb your stubborn will, and break the impetuosity of your temper. . . . Are you more humble, more gentle, more patient, more placable than you were? I fear, quite the reverse; I fear your natural tempers are rather increased than diminished. Oh, beware, lest God give you up to your own heart's lusts, and let you follow your own imaginations.

"Under all these conflicts, it might be an unspeakable blessing, that you have a husband who knows your temper and can bear with it; who, after you have tried him numberless ways, laid to his charge things that he knew not, robbed him, betrayed his confidence, revealed his secrets, given him a thousand treacherous wounds, purposely aspersed and murdered his character, and made it your *business* so to do, under the poor pretence of vindicating your own character—who, I say, after all these provocations, is still willing to forgive you all, to overlook what is past as if it had not been, and to receive you with open arms; only, not while you have a sword in your hand, with which you are continually striking at me, though you cannot hurt me. . . .

"My dear Molly, let the time past suffice. As yet the breach may be repaired. You have wronged me much, but not beyond forgiveness. I love you still, and am as clear from all other women as the day I was born. At length, know me, and know yourself. Your enemy I cannot be; but let me be your friend. Suspect me no more, asperse me no more, provoke me no more. Do not any longer contend for mastery, for power, money, or praise. Be content to be a private, insignificant person, known and loved by God and me. Attempt no more to abridge me of my liberty, which I claim by the laws of God and man. Leave me to be governed by

God and my own conscience. Then shall I govern you with gentle sway, and show that I do indeed love you,[1] even as Christ the Church."

But Mrs. Wesley was incapable of understanding such a language, where firmness was tempered by kindness. At last, however, she took her final leave, declaring she would never come back. This time the cup ran over. Wesley, who for twenty years had endured a daily martyrdom, wrote in his *Journal* the following note: "*January 23rd*, 1771.—For what cause I know not to this day, —— set out for Newcastle, purposing 'never to return.' *Non eam reliqui; non dimisi: non revocabo.*"[2]

"Thus was summarily dissolved," says Southey, "this unfortunate marriage. Mrs. Wesley lived ten years after this separation, and her epitaph describes her as a woman of exemplary piety, a tender mother, and a devoted friend; but it prudently says nothing about her virtues as a wife."[3]

"During twenty years," says Stevens, "she persecuted him with unfounded suspicions and intolerable annoyances, and it is among the most admirable proofs of the genuine greatness of his character that his public career never wavered, never lost one jot of its energy or success, during this protracted domestic wretchedness."[4]

In the autumn of 1753, as a consequence of his excessive labours, Wesley had a dangerous illness: his physicians feared consumption, and ordered an entire cessation of his labours and retirement into the country. The societies in London and in the provinces became

[1] Moore's *Life of Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 175.

[2] "I did not desert her; I did not send her away: I will not recall her."

[3] Southey, *Life of Wesley*, chap. xxiv.

[4] Stevens, *History of Methodism*, vol. i. p. 370.

alarmed at the news, and offered public prayers for his restoration. Everything seemed to point to a fatal consummation, and Wesley himself expected it, as is proved by the following epitaph, which, "to prevent vile panegyric," he composed himself: "*Here lieth the body of John Wesley, a brand plucked out of the burning: who died of a consumption in the fifty-first year of his age, not leaving, after his debts are paid, ten pounds behind him; praying, God be merciful to me an unprofitable servant.*"

This illness called forth many testimonies of sympathy from all quarters, and showed the real sentiments entertained towards him by those who differed from him in their religious views. None of those testimonies was more precious than that of Whitefield. The letter written by the former fellow-labourer of Wesley does too much honour to both to be withheld. It proves also that every touch of bitterness had disappeared from the intercourse of these two servants of God, and that both were living in that lofty region where the evils of this world are as if they were not:—

"BRISTOL, *December 3rd*, 1753.

"REV. AND VERY DEAR SIR,—If seeing you so weak when leaving London distressed me, the news and prospect of your approaching dissolution hath quite weighed me down. I pity myself and the Church, but not you. A radiant throne awaits you, and ere long you will enter into your Master's joy. Yonder He stands with a massy crown, ready to put it on your head, amidst an admiring throng of saints and angels. But I, poor I, that have been waiting for my dissolution these nineteen years, must be left behind to grovel here below! Well! this is my comfort: it cannot be long ere the chariots will be sent even for worthless me. If prayers can detain them, even you, Rev. and Dear Sir,

shall not leave us yet; but if the decree is gone forth, that you must now fall asleep in Jesus, may He kiss your soul away, and give you to die in the embraces of triumphant love! If in the land of the dying, I hope to pay my last respects to you next week. If not, Rev. and very Dear Sir, farewell. *Ego sequar, etsi non passibus æquis.*[1] My heart is too big, tears trickle down too fast, and you are, I fear, too weak for me to enlarge. Underneath you may there be Christ's everlasting arms! I commend you to His never-failing mercy, and am,—Rev. and very Dear Sir, Your most affectionate, sympathising, and afflicted younger brother in the gospel of our common Lord,

G. WHITEFIELD."

Whitefield's fears were not realised, and Wesley was restored to health. For nearly forty years more he was yet to be engaged in the service of God and of the Churches. His recovery was slow. The leisure thus afforded he made use of in preparing several works for the press. He finished the revision of various books destined to form part of the "Christian Family Library." Removing from Lewisham to the Hot-Wells, near Bristol, he there commenced his *Notes on the New Testament.*

On the return of spring, Wesley resumed his ordinary labours with renewed vigour.

[1] Virgil, *Æneid*, book ii. 724: "I shall follow, though not with equal steps."

CHAPTER IV

ABUNDANT LABOURS: NEW AUXILIARIES

(1755–1760)

On resuming the task which had been interrupted by his sickness, Wesley felt deeply thankful to God for the great revival work which, in the course of the last fifteen years, had so greatly altered the religious state of Great Britain. We find, in his *Journal* of that period, the following entry, in which these feelings are fully expressed.

"From a deep sense of the amazing work which God has of late years wrought in England, I preached in the evening on those words (Ps. cxlvii. 20), 'He hath not dealt so with any nation'; no, not even with Scotland or New England. In both these, God has indeed made bare His arm; yet not in so astonishing a manner as among us. This must appear to all who impartially consider: 1. The numbers of persons on whom God has wrought. 2. The swiftness of His work in many, both convinced and truly converted in a few days. 3. The depth of it in most of these, changing the heart as well as the whole conversation. 4. The clearness of it, enabling them boldly to say, 'Thou hast loved me; Thou hast given Thyself for me.' 5. The continuance of it. God has wrought in Scotland and New England, at several times, for some weeks or months together; but

among us, He has wrought for near eighteen years together, without any observable intermission. Above all, let it be remarked, that a considerable number of the regular clergy were engaged in that great work in Scotland; and in New England, above an hundred, perhaps as eminent as any in the whole province, not only for piety but also for abilities, both natural and acquired; whereas in England there were only two or three inconsiderable clergymen, with a few young, raw, unlettered men; and these opposed by well-nigh all the clergy, as well as laity, in the nation. He that remarks this must needs own, both that this is a work of God, and that He hath not wrought so in any other nation." [1]

Wesley had now reached middle age without losing anything of the ardour and activity of youth. He travelled on an average five thousand miles a year, for the most part on horseback, without the least regard to inclemency of weather. He preached twice or thrice a day, and invariably conducted a service at five o'clock in the morning all the year round. While traversing on horseback the counties of England, he read books of every description: theology, history, literature, science, all had an interest for him, and he could at any time draw upon the resources thus accumulated. The observations on his reading, which abound throughout his journals, indicate an independent and, generally speaking, a sound and accurate judgment.

Wesley had embraced a missionary life as being his duty, and he knew how to find pleasure where his duty lay. Here and there, in his journals, we find remarks which show that, had he consulted his personal tastes, he would have preferred a more quiet way of living. During a short stay he made in an Irish village, he wrote as follows: "Oh, who should drag me into a

[1] *Journal* 16th June 1755.

great city if I did not know there is another world? How gladly could I spend the remainder of a busy life in solitude and retirement!"[1] At another time he stops at a cottage on the picturesque coast of Wales, and he writes: "Here I was in a little, quiet, solitary spot (*maxime animo exoptatum meo!*[2]) where no human voice was heard, but those of the family."[3] Speaking of Newcastle, he says: "Certainly, if I did not believe there was another world, I should spend all my summers here; as I know no place in Great Britain comparable to it for pleasantness. But I seek another country, and therefore am content to be a wanderer upon earth."[4]

And a wanderer he continued, although he was married. Mrs. Wesley sometimes accompanied him in the beginning of their wedded life; but such a way of living was not to her taste, and the natural incompatibility, which more and more manifested itself between them, soon led each of them to follow his or her own bent. Wesley, who had not been wise enough to follow the example of St. Paul and remain single, prudently obeyed the apostle's recommendation, "that they that have wives, be as though they had none" (1 Cor. vii. 29).

Every year he went on an extensive journey, which embraced the northern counties of England, with Ireland, and often Scotland: the tour required from three to six months. On his return to London, where he had a house adjoining the Foundery chapel, he seldom remained several weeks in succession in the metropolis, but went to visit, for a longer or a shorter period, either Cornwall, or Bristol, or the east of England. All along his way he now found organised Methodist societies,

[1] Quoted by Stevens, vol. i. p. 369.

[2] "Retreat most heartily desired by me."

[3] *Journal*, 26th March 1750.

[4] *Ibid.*, 5th June 1759.

or at least friends who welcomed him. And he was fond of leaving the beaten track to go and explore new places.

It was in 1755 that he paid his first visit to Liverpool. That city, which now occupies the second rank in England, and numbers more than half a million of people, was then in its infancy. Wesley spent there five days, and he makes the following remark: "Two-thirds of the town, we were informed, have been added within these forty years. If it continue to increase in the same proportion, in forty years more it will nearly equal Bristol."[1] Wesley's previsions have been more than realised, the population of Liverpool being now almost four times as great as that of Bristol. His wise judgment discovered the importance of that place, strategically, as it were, and he tried to establish the Methodist work firmly in that city which had such a bright prospect. Soon he had there a society and a chapel. As to the disposition of the inhabitants, he says: "The people in general are the most mild and courteous I ever saw in a seaport town, as indeed appears by their friendly behaviour not only to the Jews and Papists who live among them, but even to the Methodists so called. . . . Every morning, as well as evening, abundance of people gladly attended the preaching. Many of them, I learned, were dear lovers of controversy; but I had better work. I pressed upon them all, 'repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.'"[2]

In 1757 he stopped at Hornby whilst visiting the north. There he found a few Methodists who had been expelled from their dwelling-houses by the landlord, with the intention thus to punish them for their religious preference. But they did not lose courage, and "built

[1] *Journal*, 15th April 1755. [2] *Ibid.*, 14th April 1755.

some little houses at the end of the town, in which forty or fifty of them lived together," a most interesting Christian population.[1]

Wesley visited, for the first time in December 1748, a small society at Wandsworth, near London, which, being exposed to all the fury of an unmerciful mob, and to the contempt of an unjust magistracy, had soon been broken up. When he came back to that place, ten years later, he was received in the house of a rich planter from the West Indies, called Nathaniel Gilbert, who was residing there temporarily. This gentleman belonged to a great English family, and numbered among his ancestors the eminent navigator, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, who was himself a half-brother of Sir Walter Raleigh. He had been most carefully educated, and had presided at one time over the administrative council in Antigua, where his family had settled. One of his brothers, having been converted in England through the instrumentality of Wesley, sent him a few of his books, which impressed Gilbert very strongly. He came over to Europe to spend two years, chiefly with a view to personal intercourse with the man whose writings had awakened his conscience.

In the course of the visit which Wesley paid to this gentleman, "two negro servants of his and a mulatto appeared to be much awakened." Wesley adds in his *Journal*, "Shall not His saving health be made known to all nations?"[2] On the 29th November following he baptized two of these Africans, with this remark: "One of these is deeply convinced of sin, the other rejoices in God her Saviour, and is the first African Christian I have known. But shall not our Lord, in due time, have these heathens also 'for His inheritance'?"[3]

[1] *Journal*, 7th July 1757. [2] *Ibid.*, 17th January 1758.
[3] *Ibid.*, 29th November 1758.

"These seem simple entries," says Tyerman, "but as the acorn contains the oak, so they contain the germ of the marvellous Methodist work and successes among the sable sons of benighted and degraded Africa from that day to this. We think not only of thousands of converted Africans in Africa, but we also think of tens of thousands in the West Indies, and of hundreds of thousands in the Southern States of America. This wonderful work of God began in the house of Nathaniel Gilbert, a temporary sojourner in the town of Wandsworth."[1]

It was Nathaniel Gilbert himself who began the great work in the West Indies. When he went back to Antigua, in 1759, he set upon evangelising his own slaves; he opened a place for worship, and organised a society which, at the time of his death in 1774, numbered sixty members.

We have already mentioned James Wheatley, the preacher whom Wesley felt constrained to expel on account of his bad conduct, and who, nevertheless, succeeded in establishing a very numerous society in Norwich and building a large chapel. But a new scandal committed by that minister had almost ruined the work when Wesley was entrusted with the care of saving the position. He spent a good deal of time at Norwich, and repeated his visits often: in 1759 he remained there a whole month, and found that "everything was to be wrought out of the ore, or rather out of the cinders."[2] He re-organised a society of more than 500 members, established class-meetings, made a rule that men and women should sit apart in the place of worship, and provided for a decent celebration of the Lord's Supper.[3] He wrote as follows to Ebenezer

[1] Tyerman, *Life of Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 298.
[2] *Journal*, 7th March 1759. [3] *Ibid.*, 1st April 1759.

Blackwell: "I know not if, in all my life, I have had so critical a work on my hands as that wherein I am now engaged. I am endeavouring to gather up those who were once gathered together and afterwards scattered by James Wheatley. I have re-united about seventy of them, and hope this evening to make up a hundred. But many of them have wonderful spirits, having been always accustomed to teach their teachers; so that how they will bear any kind of discipline, I cannot well tell." [1]

A few months after, Wesley came again to Norwich, and found, if he had not done so before, how difficult it is to restore a church that has gone through such a crisis. "I preached at the Tabernacle in Norwich to a large, rude, noisy congregation. I took knowledge what manner of teachers they had been accustomed to, and determined to mend them or end them. Accordingly, the next evening, after sermon, I reminded them of two things: The one, that it was not decent to begin talking aloud as soon as service was ended; and hurrying to and fro, as in a bear-garden. The other, that it was a bad custom to gather into knots just after sermon, and turn a place of worship into a coffee-house. I therefore desired that none would talk under that roof, but go quietly and silently away. And on Sunday, September 2nd, I had the pleasure to observe that all went as quietly away as if they had been accustomed to it for many years." [2]

Thus he went from city to city, and from town to town, preaching the gospel to the multitudes and organising societies. In 1760, in Cornwall, he preached thirty times in eleven days, apart from the visits he paid; but he made the sad discovery that, in consequence of the neglect of duties on the part of the preachers, the number of the members had fallen from 1700 to 1200.

In the same manner the society in Bristol, after

[1] *Works*, vol. xii. p. 187. [2] *Journal*, 30th August 1759.

amounting to 900 members, was reduced to half the number. Wesley spent several days in conversing with the members individually, to try and ascertain the true causes of that decline. He found out that earthly prosperity often brought spiritual declension in its train, as was the case with several persons in that society. He also instituted classes for catechumens, and was happy to inscribe at once eighty young people.

At Leeds he had to contend with the class-leaders, who made things difficult for him by their quarrelsome disposition. Birmingham he describes as "a barren, dry, uncomfortable place. Most of the seed which has been sown for so many years, the 'wild boars' have 'rooted up'; the fierce, unclean, brutish, blasphemous Antinomians have utterly destroyed it. And the mystic foxes have taken true pains to spoil what remained with their new gospel. Yet it seems God has a blessing for this place still; so many still attend the preaching; and He is eminently present with the small number that is left in the society."[1] And a few years after, that society revived and progressed wonderfully.

At Manchester, where, thanks to the indulgence of the magistrates, the mob had severely annoyed the Methodists, Wesley found an altered state of things: it had sufficed that some of the officials displayed a little firmness for disorders to cease.

In 1759 Wesley found at Newcastle about 1800 members. He continued preaching not only in the chapel, but also in the streets, and he remarks on this subject: "What marvel the devil does not love field-preaching? Neither do I: I love a commodious room, a soft cushion, an handsome pulpit. But where is my zeal if I do not trample all these under foot, in order to save one more soul?"[2] On a certain occasion, when he

[1] *Journal*, 4th April 1755. [2] *Ibid.*, 26th June 1759.

was preaching from the steps of the Exchange, some people threw at him mud and rotten eggs; but a stout fishwoman, who may have been a little excited by drink, came and stood by his side, and interposed her vast frame between him and the aggressors, whom she threatened with her fist, shouting at the same time, "If ony yen o' ye lift up another hand to touch ma canny man, ayl floor ye direckly." The noisy fellows understood her meaning, and acted accordingly: they remained quiet to the end of the sermon.[1]

The years we are reviewing at present were comparatively quiet. And when the spirit of persecution awoke anew, it was not so violent in its paroxysms as before. Now and then open-air meetings were still disturbed, and the mob threatened to overthrow or burn the houses in which the Methodists held their meetings. In Ireland, political and religious hatred continued as incitements to fanaticism. Whitefield visited that country in 1757, and narrowly escaped being massacred in Dublin, because he had prayed for the king and for the success of his allies in war. Hundreds of Roman Catholics followed him about, throwing stones at him until his face was all bloody. In the tumult he lost his hat, which had been a protection for his head, and he felt as though his last hour had come; and he expected, like Stephen, "to go off in this bloody triumph to the immediate presence of his Master." Providentially, the door of a clergyman's house was opened, and here he found a temporary refuge. On entering, he was speechless, but gradually revived, when he found the minister's wife desired his absence, for fear the house should be pulled down. At last he was rescued by some friends, who succeeded in getting him into a carriage. "I leaped into it," he writes, "and rode in gospel triumph through the

[1] Tyerman, *Life of Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 330.

oaths, curses, and imprecations of whole streets of Papists unhurt. None but those who were spectators of the scene can form an idea of the affection with which I was received by the weeping, mourning, but now joyful Methodists. A Christian surgeon was ready to dress my wounds, which being done I went into the preaching place, and, after giving a word of exhortation, joined in a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to Him who makes our extremity His opportunity, and who stills the noise of the waves and the madness of the most malignant people." [1]

It was also in Ireland that Wesley, three years later, was assailed by a mob, but in circumstances not quite so tragical, even bordering a little on the comical. Whilst he was preaching in a private house at Carrick-upon-Shannon, "an esquire and justice of the peace came down with a drum, and what mob he could collect," says Wesley. "I went into the garden with the congregation, while he was making a speech to his followers in the street. He then attacked William Ley (who stood at the door), being armed with an halbert and long sword; and ran at him with the halbert, but missing his thrust, he then struck at him, and broke it short upon his wrist. Having made his way through the house to the other door, he was at a full stop. James Glasbrook held it fast on the other side. While he was endeavouring to force it open, one told him I was preaching in the garden. On this he quitted the room in haste, ran round the house, and, with part of his retinue, climbed over the wall into the garden; and with a whole volley of oaths and curses declared, 'You shall not preach here to-day.' I told him, 'Sir, I do not intend it; for I have preached already.' This made him ready to tear the ground. Finding he was not to

[1] Tyerman, *Life of Whitefield*, vol. ii. p. 396.

be reasoned with, I went into the house. Soon after, he revenged himself on James Glasbrook (by breaking the truncheon of his halbert on his arm), and on my hat, which he beat and kicked most valiantly. But a gentleman rescued it out of his hands, and we rode quietly out of the town." [1]

The excitement that prevailed in Ireland at that time finds a natural explanation in the attempts at landing made by the French. It was during the Seven Years' War, that lamentable war which so much weakened and almost ruined France. Wesley, who always shone by his patriotic feelings, had offered the English Government to raise and equip at his own cost a company of volunteers. His offer was not accepted. When he visited Ireland, four years later, a Dunkirk squadron, commanded by an old corsair named Thurot, landed in that country about a thousand French soldiers, who, under the command of Lieutenant-General Cavenac, seized upon the town of Carrickfergus.

The French historian, Henri Martin, says of that undertaking: "It was a desperate adventure, and it could have no result except throwing away the lives of some brave soldiers. Thurot was killed, and his ships were taken." [2]

Wesley was lodged, at Carrickfergus, in the very house where Cavenac stayed. "I had much conversation with Monsieur Cavenac, the French General," he writes, "not on the circumstances, but the essence of religion. He seemed to startle at nothing, but said more than once, and with emotion, 'Why, this is my religion: there is no true religion besides it!'" [3] "I asked, 'Is it true that you had a design to burn the town?' He

[1] *Journal*, 10th June 1760.
[2] *Histoire de France*, 1853, vol. xviii. p. 155.
[3] *Journal*, 6th May 1760.

cried out, 'Jesus! Maria! We never had such a thought! To burn, to destroy, cannot enter into the heart or head of a good man.'"[1] Wesley conceived a real admiration for this military character. He wrote thus about him to his friend Blackwell: "One would think the French king sent these men on purpose to show what officers he has in his army. I hope there are some such in the English army; but I never found them yet."[2]

The unfortunate war brought to England numerous French prisoners. Wesley visited those who had been sent to Knowle, near Bristol, and found there above eleven hundred of them, "without anything to lie on but a little dirty straw, or anything to cover them but a few foul thin rags, either by day or night, so that they died like rotten sheep."[3] In the evening he preached in Bristol from the text, "Thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Ex. xxiii. 9). "Eighteen pounds were contributed immediately, which were made up to four-and-twenty the next day. With this we bought linen and woollen cloth, which was made up into shirts, waistcoats, and breeches. Some dozens of stockings were added: all which were carefully distributed where there was the greatest need." He also published in the newspapers a letter which brought more supplies, and allowed him to relieve that great misery. In the following year he again visited the prisoners in the same place, and made another collection for them.[4] We

[1] *Journal*, 5th May 1760. [2] Tyerman, vol. ii. p. 351.

[3] *Journal*, 15th October 1759.

[4] *Ibid.*, 24th October 1760. Twenty years later, we again find Wesley taking an interest in French prisoners. "At eleven I preached in Winchester, where there are four thousand five hundred French prisoners. I was glad to find they have plenty of wholesome food; and are treated, in all respects, with great humanity" (*Journal*, 6th October 1779).

need not doubt but that he cared for their spiritual welfare; for we know he sometimes preached to such, for instance, at Redruth, and at Gwennap, in Cornwall.[1]

In the period which we now have reached, Methodism secured fresh supporters from the ranks of the Anglican clergy. William Baddiley accomplished in Derbyshire a work similar to that of Grimshaw in the county of York: he organised societies and employed laymen to watch over them. Thomas Goodday, of Sunderland, offered his pulpit to Wesley, and wrote to him very interesting letters, begging his counsels and prayers. Richard Conyers, the vicar of Helmsley, showed a great zeal for instructing children and bringing his parishioners to conversion. Henry Venn, curate of St. Matthew's Church in London, was one of the warmest friends of the Revival, and worked abundantly for its furtherance. William Romaine, who was the son of a French Protestant refugee, contributed nobly towards the same end by his distinguished theological knowledge and by his talent as a preacher. Walter Shirley, rector of Loughrea, in Ireland, and related to the Countess of Huntingdon, was by her introduced to the leaders of the religious movement, and soon zealously participated in it. Martin Madan, a relative of the poet Cowper, having been converted by the means of Wesley, became

[1] *Journal*, 18th September 1759. In the same place, Wesley relates a circumstance which was very honourable for the French prisoners. "Here I learned a remarkable occurrence. A few days ago some hundred English, who had been prisoners in France, were landed at Penzance, by a cartel ship. Many of these passed through Redruth, going home; but in a most forlorn condition. None showed more compassion to them than the French. They gave them food, clothes, or money, and told them, 'We wish we could do more, but we have little for ourselves here.' Several who had only two shirts, gave a naked Englishman one. A French boy, meeting an English boy who was half naked, took hold of him, and stopped him, cried over him a while, and then pulled off his own coat and put it upon him!"

one of the most popular preachers in the Church of England.

Another clergyman, with whom Wesley had much intercourse, and who occupies a conspicuous place in the history of the Revival, is John Berridge, the vicar of Everton. He was forty, and had been a minister for many years, when he was converted in 1756. From that moment he became an indefatigable herald of the pure gospel. With the help of a neighbouring clergyman named Hicks, whom he had gained to a living faith, he extended his zealous activity to the counties of Bedford, Cambridge, Essex, Hertford, and Huntingdon. Within that wide field he preached, for more than twenty years, ten to twelve times a week on an average, although the bishops tried hard to confine him to his own parish. His picturesque sermons attracted crowds of hearers, who came from afar and were deeply impressed by his preaching. In the first year after his conversion he was visited by about a thousand people who were anxious to get converted themselves, and it is said that during the same period four thousand were awakened under his ministry. He spent his fortune, and even sold his silver plate, for the maintenance of the numerous lay-preachers he employed, and to pay the rent of halls for them to preach in.

Although a Calvinist, Berridge asked Wesley to come and see him. Wesley accepted the invitation, and had reason to marvel at the splendid work which was being accomplished by means of the vicar of Everton. He observed, with astonishment, that this religious movement was marked by strong physical phenomena (fainting away, crying out, etc.), such as had made so much stir in the beginning of his own ministry, and which had since disappeared. He added: "I have generally observed more or less of these outward

symptoms to attend the beginning of a general work of God. So it was in New England, Scotland, Holland, Ireland, and many parts of England; but after a time they gradually decrease, and the work goes on more quietly and silently. Those whom it pleases God to employ in His work ought to be quite passive in this respect: they should choose nothing, but leave entirely to Him all the circumstances of His own work."[1]

Berridge wrote to him as follows, on the 16th July 1759:—

"Dear Sir, — Mr. Hicks and myself have been preaching in the fields for this month past, and the power of the Lord is wonderfully present with the word. Near twenty towns have received the gospel in a greater or less degree; and we continually receive fresh invitations whenever we go out. The word is everywhere like a hammer, breaking the rock in pieces. People fall down, cry out most bitterly, and struggle so vehemently, that five or six men can scarce hold them. It is wonderful to see how the fear of the Lord falls even upon unawakened sinners. When we enter a new village, the people stare, and laugh, and rail abundantly; but when we have preached night and morning, and they have heard the outcries of wounded sinners, they seem as much alarmed as if the French were at their doors. As soon as three or four receive convictions in a village, they are desired to meet together two or three nights in a week, which they readily comply with. At first, they only sing; afterwards, they join reading and prayer to singing, and the presence of the Lord is greatly with them. Let me mention two instances. At Orwell ten people were broken down in one night, only by hearing a few people sing hymns. At Grand-

[1] *Journal*, 6th August 1759.

chester, a mile from Cambridge, seventeen people were seized with strong convictions last week, only by hearing hymns sung."[1]

In that same year, 1758, when Wesley had formed an acquaintance with Berridge, he also became acquainted with John Newton, the pious curate of Olney, and the author of *Cardiphonia*. Newton, after living a very adventurous and disorderly youth, was happily converted. He obtained ordination only in 1764. Before that, he preached as a lay-preacher in Liverpool and its vicinity. It was there that Wesley found him, and he judged him at once according to his real worth. "His case is very peculiar," writes he; "our Church requires that clergymen should be men of learning, and, to this end, have a university education. But how many have a university education, and yet no learning at all? Yet these men are ordained! Meantime, one of eminent learning, as well as unblamable behaviour, cannot be ordained *because he was not at the university!* What a mere farce is this! Who would believe that any Christian bishop would stoop to so poor an evasion?"[2] Wesley would have rejoiced to see a man so well qualified, but whom the bishops did not want to admit in the ranks of the official clergy, enter those of his itinerating preachers. No doubt, if Newton had been able to consult only his inclination, he would have accepted Wesley's offer; but his health was delicate, and he could not expose himself to all kinds of bad weather on the high-roads; besides, he had such family charges that he did not feel justified in sharing the life of hardships which was the lot of Methodist preachers. The difficulties which had barred his way to holy orders were at last removed, and the Church of

[1] Tyerman, vol. ii. p. 332. [2] *Journal*, 20th March 1760.

England gained one of those men who best served her and did honour to her by restoring spiritual life within her membership.

About the same time, Wesley entered into correspondence with Augustus Toplady, who, at the age of sixteen, after hearing James Morris, one of Wesley's itinerants, preach in a barn, was soundly converted and went to study in Trinity College, Dublin. The letters which he wrote as a student to Wesley were full of the marks of his deep piety and of a respectful affection: nothing in them announced the man who, a few years later, was to display such bitter feeling in controversy, and to defend so passionately the most extreme Calvinistic views.

Most of the ministers we have just named connected themselves with the Calvinistic branch of Methodism. The man we are going to mention was an exception, and he became Wesley's best coadjutor in the Church of England, the champion of his theological views and his designated successor.

John Fletcher (Jean Guillaume de la Flechère) was born in 1729, at Nyon, a small town on the north shore of the Lake of Geneva. He came from an old family originally from Savoy. After successful studies in the Academy of Geneva, with a view to become a Christian minister, he shrank from an office for which he feared he was unfit, and sought a military career. But Providence having shut that way before him, he determined to visit England, where he came in 1749 or 1750. He found a situation as tutor in the family of Mr. Thomas Hill, M.P. It was during one of Fletcher's journeys to London that he first met with Methodists. "Amongst the Methodists," says the Rev. F. W. Macdonald, "Fletcher learnt what Wesley had learnt from the Moravians, that there was something in religion to

which he was yet a stranger. Like so many others of fine moral nature and virtuous habits, he was much perplexed as to the nature of saving faith. 'Is it possible,' he writes, 'that I, who have always been so religious, who have made divinity my study, and received the premiums of piety (so called) from the university for my writings on divine subjects,—is it possible that I should yet be so ignorant as not to know what faith is?'[1] After a protracted struggle, he was enabled to 'believe with the heart unto righteousness.'"

From the time of his conversion to the close of his life, Fletcher was a Methodist. The exact date when he joined the society cannot be determined, but in the year 1756 he was a member of a class in London.[2]

The proper vocation of Fletcher was the ministry. He was pressed by his friends to enter holy orders. Before taking this step he sought counsel from Wesley, who encouraged him to embrace a career for which he was so well prepared. In March 1757 he received deacon's orders, and a few days after he was ordained priest. But, as he wanted to signify from the beginning what would be the characteristic feature of his ministerial career, on the very day he was ordained priest in the Church of England, he hastened to Snowsfields chapel, and assisted Wesley in administering the Lord's Supper to the members of the Methodist societies.

Two short notes in Wesley's journals show how gratefully he welcomed his new colleague:—

"1757.—*Sunday, March* 13.—Finding myself weak at Snowsfields, I prayed (if He saw good) that God would send me help at the chapel, and I had it. As soon as I had done preaching, Mr. Fletcher came, who

[1] *Fletcher of Madeley*, by the Rev. Frederic W. Macdonald, p. 29.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

had just been ordained priest, and hastened to the chapel on purpose to assist me in the administration of the Lord's Supper, as he supposed me to be alone."

"*Sunday, March* 20.—Mr. Fletcher helped me again. How wonderful are the ways of God! When my bodily strength failed, and none in England were able and willing to assist me, He sent me help from the mountains of Switzerland, and an helpmeet for me in every respect; where could I have found such another?"[1]

Three years later, Fletcher was inducted to the vicarage of Madeley, in Shropshire. In that remote and poor parish, inhabited principally by colliers and iron-workers, ignorant, rough, and brutal, he accomplished a most blessed work, but at the same time maintained an active and hearty connection with Methodism,—so much so that he was soon one of its chief leaders, and its best theologian. The great beauty of his character as a man and a Christian, his holy life and his remarkable gifts, assign him a distinguished place in that bright constellation of men whom God raised up to illuminate England.[2]

The intercourse of Wesley with the leaders of Calvinistic Methodism continued to be marked by brotherly feelings; for he wrote in his *Journal*: "Mr. Whitefield called upon me; disputings are now no more. We love one another, and join hand in hand to promote the cause of our common Master."[3] One day he preached at Lady Huntingdon's, and administered the Lord's Supper to Whitefield and his friends: Madan, Romaine, Venn, Griffith Jones, and others.

[1] Wesley's *Journal*, 13th and 20th March 1757.

[2] Several biographies of John Fletcher have been published. We must mention specially those by Wesley and Benson, and in recent times by Tyerman and F. Macdonald.

[3] *Journal*, 5th November 1755.

It was all the more necessary that the leaders of the Methodist movement should be united, because they were all indiscriminately attacked by its adversaries. Every year new pamphlets appeared against them. The year 1760 was peculiarly fertile in that respect. In the theatre itself they were not spared. In that same year was played in London a comedy by Foote, *The Minor*, in which Methodism was ridiculed. There was another, written by the same author and called *The Methodist*; but it was not played.

During these years, Wesley had to contend with serious difficulties in regard to the attitude of Methodism towards the Church of England. We shall have to give an account of them a little further. But we cannot defer noticing the fact that the debates on that question estranged, in some measure, the two brothers from one another. Charles wished that Methodism should remain dependent on the Established Church, even when her parishes were in the hands of unworthy incumbents. John, on the contrary, although he would not separate from the Church, did not want to compromise his work in the future by submitting to an empty scruple of ecclesiastical forms. The two brothers, however, did not cease working together, but Charles left off travelling about, and confined himself to the pastoral care of the societies in London.

Among the writings of Wesley published during this period, we must mention his *Notes on the New Testament*, and his treatise on *The Doctrine of Original Sin*, in answer to Dr. Taylor: they are two of the best productions of his pen. In 1755 he engaged in a curious theological correspondence with Richard Thompson concerning the doctrine of assurance,[1] and, in the following year, in another relative to Christian

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xii. p. 451.

Perfection, with Dr. Dodd, who ended his days on the scaffold.[1]

In 1760 Methodism had been in existence less than a quarter of a century, and yet it had taken root in almost every one of the English counties; it numbered ninety travelling preachers under the supervision of John Wesley, numerous chapels, and thousands of members. Moreover, its sap was far from having lost its vitality, and the tree was soon going to shoot new branches and to produce new fruits.

[1] In 1745 Wesley exchanged very interesting letters on Methodism with an individual who used the pseudonym of John Smith, but was no other than the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Secker. This was of some use to Wesley: for it brought him to express his views on some subjects with more moderation. These letters have been published in Moore's *Life of Wesley*, vol. ii. pp. 473–578.

CHAPTER V

A REVIVAL WITHIN THE REVIVAL—BEGINNING OF METHODISM IN AMERICA

(1761–1770)

WESLEY was almost a sexagenarian at the commencement of the decade upon which we are now entering; his activity, however, suffered no abatement. Though in years he was bordering on old age, he was still in full possession of physical and intellectual strength, and, in the ardour with which he prosecuted his work, he was as young as ever. That work had two equally important features, evangelisation and organisation. A sketch of the latter, as gradually developed in his societies, we shall reserve for a separate chapter. In this we shall continue to follow the course of Wesley's evangelistic labours. The success that had attended his long itinerancy was too marked for him to dream of relinquishing that mode of action: to have settled down into a sedentary life would not only have ill accorded with his own acquired taste, but also have proved a deathblow to his societies. At that critical period of their existence they more than ever needed the vital bond which his strong authority established and maintained among them. Had they been deprived of this at so early a stage of their history, they would, in all probability, have been reduced to total dissolution

through the influence of sectarian strife, and their providential mission have been frustrated.

Thus Wesley's energies were still devoted to incessant journeyings: his parish comprised the three kingdoms, and, ever widening, was drawing near to the realisation of his own ideal, expressed in the memorable words, "The world is my parish."

In 1761, and several succeeding years, he had the happiness of witnessing a remarkable revival which spread throughout his societies. Wesley had, from the beginning, both received himself, and preached to others, the doctrine of Christian perfection: he believed and taught that it is possible for a Christian in this life to obtain a complete victory over sin. Even at Oxford he had discovered in his favourite authors this precious gem, though its brilliancy was clouded by the thick smoke of mystical imaginations. He had gradually restored it to its pristine purity, and to its place in the cabinet of Scripture truth. According to his view, deliverance from sin, like all other blessings of the New Covenant, was the fruit of the redeeming work of the Cross; but, like them, it was to be attained only by the wrestling faith of the individual Christian.

This inspiriting doctrine, though held by Wesley from the beginning, was not of a nature to be immediately grasped, in all its comprehensiveness, by his people. First, it was necessary that his preaching should be mainly directed to the fundamental articles of the faith, providing milk for babes before he could distribute strong meat to them, when they had attained riper years. But when once the societies were well grounded in the rudiments of our holy religion, it needed that they should be built up, and Wesley believed that this doctrine was "the grand depositum that God had committed to the Methodists, and that their special

mission was to spread scriptural holiness through the land."

The great Revival which made its appearance in the year 1761 indicated that this mission was being taken up in good earnest. For a long time a considerable spiritual quickening was observable throughout the societies. "Here began," says Wesley, "that glorious work of sanctification which had been nearly at a stand for twenty years. But from time to time it spread, first through various parts of Yorkshire, afterwards in London, then through most parts of England; next through Dublin, Limerick, and all the south and west of Ireland. And wherever the work of sanctification increased, the whole work of God increased in all its branches."[1]

Wesley's journals of this period are full of details respecting the progress of this remarkable work. Wherever he goes he finds that the societies are strengthened and increased under the vivifying breath of the Spirit of God, and while their internal life is thus developed, their external activity is more abundantly rewarded with success. In March 1761 he called many of his preachers together at Leeds, in order to concert measures for the further promotion of this great movement: he saw plainly that in their preaching they ought to aim more than ever at encouraging and directing the people in their aspirations after holiness. From these brethren he learned that the Revival was extending over all Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. A flame was kindled also at Manchester, which he trusted "neither men nor devils would ever be able to quench." "Many persons in London," he says, "have experienced so deep and universal a change as it had not entered into their hearts to conceive."

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xiii. p. 350.

At Bristol the society was larger than it had ever been before. "God was pleased to pour out His Spirit this year," he writes, "on every part both of England and Ireland; perhaps in a manner we had never seen before; certainly not for twenty years."[1]

"Our day of Pentecost," he writes again in 1762, "is fully come." In London alone there were four hundred witnesses of deliverance from all sin. At Liverpool the society was wonderfully quickened; and Wesley found a remarkable maturity in their piety. "What do you want now?" said he to a girl of twelve years. "Nothing in this world," said she, with amazing energy,—"nothing but more of my Jesus."[2]

The revival that broke out in Dublin, Wesley deemed the most remarkable of all. The main instrument of it was John Manners, "a plain man, of middling sense, and not eloquent, but rather rude in speech; one who had never before been remarkably useful, but seemed to be raised up for this single work. And as soon as it was done, he fell into a consumption, languished a while, and died." In one of his letters he writes to Wesley: "The people are all on fire; such a day as last Sunday I never saw. While I was at prayer in the society, the power of the Lord overshadowed us, and some cried out, 'Lord, I can believe!'" On visiting Dublin, Wesley found the truth had not been at all exceeded. "In some respects," he says, "the work of God in this place was more remarkable than even that in London. . . . The work was more pure. In all this time, while they were mildly and tenderly treated, there was none of them headstrong or unadvisable; none that were wiser than their teachers; none who dreamed of being immortal, or infallible, or incapable of temptation; in short, no

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xiii. p. 352.
[2] *Journal*, 4th August 1762.

whimsical or enthusiastic persons: all were calm and sober minded."[1] This eulogium on the work at Dublin involves a censure on that in London. We shall see presently that there was room for this.

At Limerick, Edinderry, and other places in Ireland, a similar work was carried on in many hearts, and the presence of Wesley was as a spark to set them in a flame.

At the close of 1763 Wesley wrote: "Here I stood, and looked back on the late occurrences. Before Thomas Walsh left England, God began that great work which has continued ever since without any considerable intermission. During the whole time, many have been convinced of sin, many justified, and many backsliders healed. But the peculiar work of this season has been what St. Paul calls 'the perfecting of the saints.' Many persons in London, in Bristol, in York, and in various parts both of England and Ireland, have experienced so deep and universal a change as it had not before entered into their hearts to conceive. After a deep conviction of inbred sin, of their total fall from God, they have been so filled with faith and love (and generally in a moment), that sin vanished, and they found from that time no pride, anger, desire, or unbelief. They could rejoice ever more, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks. Now, whether we call this the destruction or suspension of sin, it is a glorious work of God: such a work as, considering both the depth and extent of it, we never saw in these kingdoms before."[2]

Wesley had, as we have said, good reason to complain of the mischief that had been done by certain enthusiasts in London. Among the local preachers was a military man named George Bell, whose flighty imagination was so captivated by the doctrine of deliverance from sin as

[1] *Journal*, 26th July 1762. [2] *Ibid.*, 15th December 1763.

to betray him into dangerous errors. He pretended to be infallible, declared that he was free from temptation, and, fully possessed with the idea of his own superior spirituality, entirely revolted against the authority of a Christian of less lofty pretensions. He even believed himself endowed with the gift of miracles, and accordingly attempted to heal a blind man. The failure that followed this exercise of his gift did not by any means undeceive either himself or the simple souls that gave credence to his professions. The fanaticism spread, and Wesley was grieved to see Thomas Maxfield, the oldest of his preachers, rallying to its standard.

The party thus formed taught that a person who is merely justified is not born of God, but that when once sanctified, he need no longer watch and pray; his sole duty is to believe, and further, that he can neither sin nor fall from grace. These pernicious errors spread with alarming rapidity, and, after trying in vain the effect of forbearance and persuasion, which only seemed to increase the evil, Wesley was compelled to exclude George Bell from the society. A mad prophecy of Bell's, to the effect that the world would come to an end on the 28th of February 1763, obtained such currency that, for the sake of his own reputation and that of his societies, Wesley was obliged to disown all partnership in it through the medium of the public journals.

The partisans of George Bell were too far gone in the way of fanaticism to be at all disconcerted by the non-fulfilment of the prophecy; they discovered all sorts of reasons, satisfactory to their own minds, for the delay of the grand catastrophe which they had so anxiously awaited. The exclusion of their leader from the societies was the signal for their retirement; and about one hundred and seventy resigned their connection with

Wesley. To those who endeavoured to dissuade them, they replied, "Blind John is not capable of teaching us; we will keep to Mr. Maxfield." The latter also, in spite of all the efforts of his old friend to retain him, completely broke with him, and became the recognised pastor of the disaffected ones.

It was manifest that Wesley, in order to exercise discipline, should not have waited until the innovators had almost destroyed the societies. If, instead of leaving them to take the initiative and have the glory of withdrawing, Wesley had from the first used his authority, he would perhaps thereby have avoided even the appearance of complicity in their excesses, as well as the danger of furnishing an argument to those who held that the doctrine of entire sanctification necessarily involved these dangerous consequences. But he hoped that mildness would avail more than severity. One of his members said to him one day: "Sir, I employ several men. Now, if one of my servants will not follow my direction, is it not right for me to discard him at once? Pray, do you apply this to Mr. Bell." His answer shows the nature of his scruples: "It is right to discard such a servant; but what would you do if he were your son?"[1]

When the division took place, he felt it deeply. Maxfield having refused to preach in his turn at the Foundery, Wesley took his place and preached from the words, "If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." And he adds in his *Journal*: "So the breach is made; but I am clear, I have done all I possibly could to prevent it."[2]

Those painful eccentricities did not, however, paralyse the glorious work of which they were the parody. "We have lost," says Wesley, "only the dross, the enthusiasm

[1] *Journal*, 1st January 1763. [2] *Ibid.*, 28th April 1763.

the prejudice and offence. The pure gold remains: that is to say, faith which worketh by love, and, we have ground to believe, increases every day."[1]

These agitations were not the only ones that troubled the societies in Great Britain at that time; other serious problems of organisation were raised among them and greatly occupied Wesley's attention: but we must defer examining them until we begin another chapter.

The ten years from 1760 to 1770 were among the busiest of Wesley's ministry. He never worked more than at the time of life when others generally begin to rest. "Three days in a week I can preach thrice a day without hurting myself; but I had now far exceeded this, besides meeting classes and exhorting the societies."[2] When he was sixty-two, we still find him preaching three times on a Sunday, presiding at a meeting for the renewal of the covenant, speaking for an hour in a society's meeting, and riding twenty-five miles in the day.[3] His health was as good and his zeal as great as twenty-five years before. Such activity as this was required to ensure the progress of Methodism. A movement of that kind was not to be directed from a quiet study: the leader must be everywhere. Whitefield was prematurely old, and drawing near his end. Charles Wesley, for private reasons, had ceased travelling. Grimshaw was dead. Berridge, Romaine, and Venn exercised pastoral functions which did not allow their being long absent from their homes. But John Wesley had no special parish, no family: and he was left alone to go over the three kingdoms, which he did until he died. Those incessant journeys were the blessed characteristics of his career.

[1] *Journal*, 18th November 1763. [2] *Ibid.*, 15th June 1761.
[3] *Ibid.*, 11th August 1765.

Such a life afforded a great many adventures, and also plenty of fatigue. Once, after a day when he had remained sixteen hours on horseback, he found himself completely lost in the bogs of Wales. He questioned a drunken collier about the road, and got the wrong sort of information. At last, towards midnight, he fell upon a wretched inn where he could rest in some measure.[1]

On another occasion, when he and a friend were coming back from Scotland, they tried to cross Solway Firth at low tide, in order to shorten their journey; but they almost perished with their horses in the muddy sands.[2] In 1765, when on a visit to the Perronets, he had a fall from his horse which gave him inconvenience for a long time.[3]

More than once he had to accomplish prodigies in order not to miss his appointments. In 1760, the vessel that brought him back from Ireland having been delayed, Wesley had to ride night and day to reach

[1] *Journal*, 25th July 1764. [2] *Ibid.*, 24th June 1766.

[3] *Ibid.*, 18th December 1765. Several falls which Wesley had in such a long course of travelling did not diminish his taste for riding. In 1764 he wrote as follows to his friend Blackwell: "I judge of your case by my own. I must be on horseback for life, if I would be healthy. Now and then, indeed, if I could afford it, I should rest myself for fifty miles in a chaise; but without riding near as much as I do now, I must never look for health" (*Works*, vol. xii. p. 176). He expected his preachers to mind their horses carefully. He introduced a recommendation, at the Conference of 1765, that they must not override their beasts, and that they must themselves see that they are well fed and taken care of. In his *Journal* (March 1770) he asserts that his constant reading on horseback did not occasion him repeated falls, as some might think, and he explains it in this way, that he always threw the reins on the horse's neck. According to him, who was a life-long rider, it is a great blunder to fancy that a tight rein prevents the horse from stumbling. A few years later, thanks to the liberality of a noble lady friend, who presented him with a carriage and pair, Wesley could vary his means of journeying; but until the end he continued to believe in riding.

Bristol in good time, and was compelled to hire or buy a new horse every time his steed was foundered and could not go on. In 1768, when in Bristol, he was informed that his wife had become ill in London. Although a Conference of his preachers was announced to begin forty-eight hours later in Bristol, he got upon his horse, went to London, to find that the illness was not serious, and was back at the appointed moment for opening the sittings of Conference: thus accomplishing in two days a ride of 238 miles, an almost incredible feat!

This indefatigable missionary still put in the first line open-air meetings. He blamed those preachers "who coop themselves up in a room with twenty or thirty hearers," instead of going to meet the crowd where it may be found. At Portarlington, in Ireland, where the work had declined through the neglect of this special means, he went straight to the market-place, and cried aloud, "Hearken! Behold a sower went forth to sow"; and his word stirred up a numerous concourse of people.[1] Even in the towns where he had large rooms at his disposal, he went out in the streets frequently, being convinced that it was the only way to reach the multitudes.

How many interesting facts are connected with that open-air ministry! At Harston, in the depth of winter, he preached for the first time by moonlight, and "it was a solemn season, a season of holy mourning to some; to others, of joy unspeakable."[2] At Pateley Bridge he was preaching to a large and serious congregation. "As it rained, I desired the men to put on their hats; but in two or three minutes they pulled them off again, and remained bare-headed till the end of the service."[3]

The natural amphitheatre at Gwennap was his favourite preaching-place in Cornwall. There, while the

[1] *Journal*, 17th July 1762. [2] *Ibid.*, 4th January 1762.
[3] *Ibid.*, 24th July 1766.

setting sun cast its slanting rays upon the scene, he would lift his voice, and then many thousands of human voices responded to his own, singing one of those hymns which Methodism has made so popular. At St. Ives a lofty rock served for his pulpit, while the audience were ranged on a level sward that stretched far away to the sea. Wesley was by no means insensible to the advantages possessed by such spots as these: he knew how impressible the people were, and how eloquent to simple souls was the voice of nature.

The progress made by the work was manifest, even to the most prejudiced eye. At Barnard Castle, the Methodists had been persecuted for sixteen years in a thousand different ways. Catherine Graves, one of the oldest members in the place, had been accused of witchcraft, and more than once had had pins stuck into her body, according to the current way of trying sorcerers. But when Wesley passed there in 1763 he found a numerous and zealous society, with plenty of hearers, who "all seemed to take the kingdom by violence."[1] At Wednesbury, in 1764, he found the most numerous audience he had ever had outside London: after the terrific scenes of persecution, the most perfect peace reigned there.[2] In the neighbouring town of Walsall, in spite of severe weather, he had to speak in the open air, the chapel being insufficient to accommodate the people. Remembering the sufferings of past times, he could exclaim: "How is Walsall changed! How has God either tamed the wild beasts or chained them up!"[3] In Sheffield, where two places of worship had been successively pulled down by the mob, he was able to preach in a new chapel.

In Ireland, great success still attended the preaching.

[1] *Journal*, 5th June 1763. [2] *Ibid.*, 25th March 1764.
[3] *Ibid.*, 26th March 1764.

At Cork the people seemed to strive to efface the remembrance of the trials to which he had been subjected there: the clergy and gentry crowded to hear him preach. At Dublin and Limerick the congregations were larger than ever. At Kilfinnan he preached in the market-place, where nearly the whole of the population assembled, and he was afterwards accompanied to his lodgings by some of the congregation, to whom he addressed a second exhortation, and who would not leave him till the night was far advanced. The next morning, before five o'clock, the crowd assembled again in the same spirit as before: tears flowed, sobs were heard in every part; some mourning under a sense of sin, others rejoicing to hear the good news of salvation.[1]

Wesley continued to visit Scotland also, and his preaching always aroused a deep interest there, though it did not produce the same visible effects as in other parts of Great Britain. In 1764 he attended some sittings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Edinburgh, and many of the ministers listened to him when he preached on Calton Hill. He also communicated in a Presbyterian Church, showing himself to be quite free from ecclesiastical bigotry, although he was a Church of England minister.[2]

Popular tumults now became more and more rare, and, when they did occur, they were by no means of so serious a character as formerly. Opposition had very generally sunk to the level of low buffoonery.

When he was preaching at Epworth, "a kind of gentleman . . . hired a company of boys, and made a poor man exceeding drunk," in order that they should interrupt him, "while he himself played the French horn."[3] At Birmingham "the mob threw some dirt

[1] *Journal*, 18th June 1765. [2] *Ibid.*, 17th June 1764.
[3] *Ibid.*, 13th June 1763.

and stones at those who were going out" of the place of worship, which had formerly been the playhouse.[1] At Ashby-de-la-Zouch "the people were earnestly attentive," and were disturbed only by an attorney, which caused Wesley to write, "Poor man! if men live what I preach, the hope of his gain is lost."[2] In Plymouth, "at the close of the sermon, a large stone was thrown in at one of the windows," and fell at Wesley's feet.[3] At Bradford a curious incident defeated the designs of the assailants. Their leader, a man who prided himself on his respectability, had filled his pockets with rotten eggs, and towards the end of the preaching raised a cry as a signal for his accomplices to begin the assault. But, while he was preparing to make use of his missiles, a young man came and, clapping his hands on his pockets, broke all the eggs at once. The laugh was turned against the leader, and the contemplated assault failed.[4]

As he grew older, Wesley lost nothing of that authority of speech and demeanour which had contributed so much to the victories that attended his encounters with the mob. His whitening locks served to add to the authority he had gained by force of character. His utterance and his gestures produced almost magical effects upon the people. When he spoke, it was to command, and his commands were generally obeyed. At Kilkenny, on one occasion, a crowd of Catholics broke in upon one of his congregations with intent to disperse it. He simply fixed upon them a steady gaze, and then said in a tone of determination, "Be silent; or begone!" And silence was restored as if by the wand of an enchanter.[5]

[1] *Journal*, 21st March 1764. [2] *Ibid.*, 26th March 1761.
[3] *Ibid.*, 2nd September 1766. [4] *Ibid.*, 19th October 1769.
[5] *Ibid.*, 10th July 1762.

The authorities now also understood their duty better, and no longer became promoters of disorder. Almost everywhere their firmness sufficed to repress tumult. At Birmingham, at Gloucester, things took that turn. Evesham was the only place where the authorities behaved in a scandalous manner; there, one of the magistrates forgot his duty so far as to openly encourage the riotous mob.[1] At Stallbridge, however, it needed all Wesley's influence to constrain the magistrates to do their duty. For a long time the people had committed great excesses, breaking the doors and windows of the houses where the Methodists lived, plundering their goods and attacking their persons, so that they could not walk in the street without being exposed to the worst indignities. In vain did they appeal to the magistrates: they were always deaf to their complaints. In despair of obtaining justice, they wrote to Wesley, who brought their case before the Court of King's Bench, where, after great expense and long delay, he gained the day. This encouraged his friends, and proved to his adversaries that there was "law even for Methodists." When he returned to that town he was able to preach in the street, and without any molestation.[2]

The clergy retained their intolerance and ill-will longer than the magistracy. Many still denounced Wesley from their pulpits, and repulsed the Methodists from the Lord's Table, where the careless and worldly were admitted without question;[3] and some went to still further lengths. In 1765 Wesley was conducting an open-air service in a Devonshire village, when he saw the clergyman approaching in company with some of the neighbouring gentry. He began his sermon as

[1] *Journal*, 18th March 1766. [2] *Ibid.*, 30th August 1766.
[3] *Ibid.*, 27th March 1765; 27th April 1766.

follows: "There may be some truths which concern some men only; but this concerns all mankind." The clergyman interrupted by crying out, "That is false doctrine; that is predestination"; thus proving that he had not understood the first sentence. Immediately those who accompanied him began to talk and laugh in a noisy manner, and a huntsman who belonged to the party set on his dogs. Another began to address Wesley in grossly insulting terms, amid the applause of the clergyman and his company, who doubtless deemed all weapons lawful when employed against the "enemies" of the Church. Before such assailants, who, if they did not respect his ministerial gown, should at least have reverenced his grey hairs, Wesley retired, "There being no probability," he says, "of a quiet hearing."[1]

At Enniscorthy, he writes: "The mob, encouraged by their superiors, beat and abused whom they pleased, broke open their houses, and did just what they listed. A wretched clergyman confirmed them therein, and applied to the Methodist preachers 2 Timothy iii. 6, 7. . . . After he had painted them as black as devils, he added: 'I have not time to finish now; next Sunday I will give you the rest.' But the next morning he was struck in a strange manner. He could not bear to be a moment alone. He cried out: 'Those hobgoblins; do not you see them? There, there! The room is full of them!' Having continued thus some days, he screamed out: 'See that hobgoblin at the bed's feet! Oh, that roll, that roll which he holds up to me! All my sins are written therein!' Not long after, without showing the least sign of hope, he went to his account."[2]

A clergyman of York, Cordeux by name, had often urged upon his people that they should not go and hear

[1] *Journal*, 4th September 1765. [2] *Ibid.*, 15th June 1769.

the preaching of "that vagabond Wesley." One Sunday, however, after preaching in his own chapel, Wesley went to church. The incumbent, seeing a clergyman in the audience, and not knowing it was Wesley, offered him his pulpit. Wesley accepted at once and preached. When the service was over, the sexton went to Mr. Cordeux, and said, "Sir, he is the vagabond Wesley, against whom you warned us."—"Ay, indeed!" said the astonished rector, "we are trapped; but never mind, we have had a good sermon."[1]

This curious adventure was the means of curing the prejudices of the clergyman, who, on Wesley's visiting the place another time, invited him again, knowing then perfectly well with whom he had to do. We can safely conjecture that, in the same way, many of Wesley's opponents would have become his friends if they had not been blinded by prejudice, and if some happy circumstance, like that which we have just related, had brought them into contact with the worthy man whom they opposed without knowing him.

Attacks through the press against Wesley and his supporters still abounded, and most of them proceeded from the pens of clergymen. Some of these pamphlets were written in verse.[2] Most of these productions were violent and scurrilous: they generally repeated, in a

[1] *Methodist Magazine*, 1827, p. 458.

[2] It may be interesting to preserve the names of a few. "The Methodist, a Poem," 1766, a satire of a rude and even obscene character, in which Wesley, Whitefield, and the lay-preachers were violently assaulted. "Methodism Triumphant; or, the Decisive Battle between the Old Serpent and the Modern Saint," 1767: a long poem ascribed by Nichol, in his *Literary Anecdotes*, to Dr. Lancaster, a very learned clergyman. It is a serio-comic poem, relating, with a good amount of talent, a fight between Wesley and Satan. "The Troublers of Israel," 1767, is a very ordinary pamphlet in rhyme. "The Hypocrite: a Comedy" appeared in 1768.

servile manner, the same accusations of fanaticism and of Popery.[1]

One of these printed attacks deserves special notice on account of the high rank occupied by its author in the Church of England. Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester, was a writer of no small merit, and a friend of the poet Pope. In a volume on the doctrine of grace, which appeared in 1762, he entered the lists against Wesley, who, according to his view, occupied a foremost place among "modern fanatics." Though this antagonist displayed more fairness than Bishop Lavington, he proved himself equally incapable of understanding the religious movement that was taking place. Wesley's answer is remarkable, both for its matter and its form: he claims, as the basis of the work in which he is engaged, the mighty operation of the Spirit of God, whose influence he found it easy to trace in events that were taking place every day.

Another attack which perhaps did greater injury to the work of Methodism was the posthumous publication of the *Eleven Letters* of Hervey, the author of the *Meditations*. Having been early associated with Wesley and Whitefield when they were at Oxford, he had embraced the Calvinistic tenets of the latter. Under the influence of a momentary irritation, he wrote eleven virulent letters against Wesley, which he kept in

[1] We subjoin the titles of some of those libels. "A Caution against Religious Delusions," 1763, a sermon. "Four Charges," 1763, addresses to the clergy, with a view to caution them against Methodism, by Dr. Thomas Rutherforth. "A Sovereign Remedy for the Cure of Hypocrisy," 1764. "The Methodist instructed, or the Absurdity and Inconsistency of their Principles demonstrated," 1764. "Enthusiasm delineated," 1764. "Two Charges," 1766, addresses by Archdeacon Tottie, and directed, the first against Roman Catholics, and the second against Methodists. "Enthusiasm reprehended," 1768. "Methodist a Popish Idol," 1769. "The Pretences of Enthusiasts," 1769, a sermon. "Methodistical Deceit," 1770, a sermon.

manuscript: on his deathbed, it is said, he expressed regret for having written them, and requested that they might be committed to the flames. His executors, thinking of nothing but the profit that might accrue from a posthumous work of Hervey's, did not comply with this injunction, but employed a man named Cudworth to revise the manuscripts and prepare them for the press. This man was a violent opponent of Wesley, and thought fit to interpolate sentences containing the most unjust accusations, palming them off upon the public as a genuine part of the work. This publication could not but inflict considerable injury on Wesley's cause; and in Scotland, particularly, his enemies made use of it to his disadvantage.

The spirit of intolerance which raged against Methodism among the clergy resulted, in 1768, in the expulsion of six students from Oxford, "for holding Methodistical tenets, and taking upon them to pray, read, or expound the Scriptures and sing hymns in private houses."[1]

These young men found a refuge in the college founded that same year by Lady Huntingdon, at Trevecca, in Wales, and of which John Fletcher was appointed the head, whilst Joseph Benson, a young friend of Wesley, entered there soon after as principal master.

But John Fletcher, when he consented to be the president of that institution, had not intended to give up his parish of Madeley; he only wanted to favour an establishment which he considered as very interesting, and which was at that time truly representative of the Methodist movement. Unfortunately, that state of things did not last, and the Calvinistic controversy, which soon after broke out, constrained those two friends of Wesley to withdraw from Trevecca, and, in fact,

[1] Tyerman, *Life of Wesley*, vol. iii. p. 32.

absolutely prevented all community of work between the two sections of Methodism.

Already at that time we can discover a notable cooling of the intimacy between Wesley and some of the men who had embraced the Calvinistic views, such as Romaine, Venn, Conyers, and Toplady. The preaching of sanctification, described at the beginning of this chapter, was the chief cause of that alteration of feeling, which was soon embittered by a fierce contest.

Whitefield, happily, did not live to see this, and his friendship with his old Oxford associate remained to the end as close as it had been for so many years. In his *Journal*, Wesley makes the following entry on 31st January 1766: "Mr. Whitefield called upon me. He breathes nothing but peace and love. Bigotry cannot stand before him, but hides its head wherever he comes." In August of the same year there was a conference held between the two Wesleys and Whitefield, at the house of Lady Huntingdon, in London, which lasted several days, and which had practical results thus pointed out by Wesley: "If no other good result from it but our firm union with Mr. Whitefield, it is an abundant recompense for my labour. My brother and I conferred with him every day; and, let the honourable men do what they please, we resolved, by the grace of God, to go on, hand in hand, through honour and dishonour."[1] The noble woman, under whose roof these interviews took place, wished, as a sign of her approval of that amicable understanding, to invite Wesley to preach in her chapel at Bath every Sunday whilst he was at Bristol. He complied with her desire, and thus had an opportunity of speaking before many distinguished members of the aristocracy, including Horace Walpole.[2]

[1] *Journal*, 18th August 1766.

[2] In the following passage of his correspondence (vol. v. p. 16),

About the same time, Wesley enjoyed the friendship of several distinguished ladies, among whom we may quote in the first rank Lady Maxwell, who had become a widow when only nineteen years old, and who remained till the day of her death an earnest Methodist, spending her large means in good works. The letters written by Wesley to her are very interesting, and display, in the most favourable light, his qualities as pastor and friend. He numbered also among his acquaintance the Countess Buchan, a very pious lady, who appointed him one of her chaplains. It was whilst staying with her in Scotland that he wrote and preached his sermon on "The Good Steward" (Sermon li.). He was also on very good terms with Lady Glenorchy, who, having opened a chapel in Edinburgh, asked him to choose a chaplain for her. Wesley recommended to that lady, Richard de Courcy, a young minister of French extraction, who, after having been converted through Methodists in Ireland, had become the curate of the Rev. Walter Shirley.

Although Wesley was well qualified by his education and manners for easy and familiar intercourse with the great people, still he felt drawn by preference to the common people, who belonged to the sphere in which he moved habitually. His letters to some women of a very modest station in life are neither less carefully written nor less interesting than those he wrote to titled ladies.

Walpole, in his usual frivolous manner, gives an account of Wesley's preaching, which he attended at Bath in October 1766: "Wesley is a clean, elderly man, fresh coloured, his hair smoothly combed, but with a little *soupçon* of curl at the ends. Wondrous clever, but as evidently an actor as Garrick. He spoke his sermon, but so fast, and with so little accent, that I am sure he has often uttered it, for it was like a lesson. There were parts and eloquence in it; but, towards the end, he exalted his voice, and acted very ugly enthusiasm, decried learning, and told stories, like Latimer, of the fool of his college, who said, 'I *thanks* God for everything.'"

You feel, as you read them, that, in the eyes of this servant of God, rank and fortune had not much weight. It must be added, that some of these women were useful helps in Wesley's work. Sarah Ryan was the matron of Kingswood School. Mary Bosanquet, who became the wife of John Fletcher in 1781, had established, in her own house at Leytonstone, an orphanage, which she managed herself, in a true motherly spirit, with the help of a few other young ladies. Sarah Crosby, who was most remarkably gifted, visited the societies, and held meetings in which she exhorted women.[1] Others still found a field for their activity, either in the Newcastle Orphanage, or in visiting the sick and the poor, or in presiding over those groups of members which were denominated *classes*.

Wesley always showed a great zeal for relieving the poor. In the severe winter of 1762 to 1763 the Thames froze, and thousands of boatmen, and other workpeople who subsisted by the river traffic, found themselves in the most awful destitution. Flocks of hungry

[1] Sarah Crosby appears to have been the first of female preachers. Once she was to preside at a class-meeting with about thirty women, and she found herself before an audience of two hundred people. She addressed the meeting, with the conviction that she was called of God to do so. She wrote at once to Wesley to relate what she had done. He answered: "Hitherto, I think you have not gone too far. You could not well do less. I apprehend, all you can do more is, when you meet again, to tell them simply, 'You lay me under a great difficulty. The Methodists do not allow of women preachers: neither do I take upon me any such character. But I will just nakedly tell you what is in my heart.' This will, in a great measure, obviate the grand objection. . . . I do not see that you have broken any law. Go on calmly and steadily. If you have time, you may read to them the Notes on any chapter before you speak a few words; or one of the most awakening sermons, as other women have done long ago" (*Works*, vol. xii. p. 337). Wesley thus sanctioned Mrs. Crosby's preaching, but only as an exceptional case: he never made it a regular institution, and to this day women are not recognised in the Methodist Church as having the right to preach, though, as in Wesley's time, there are exceptional cases.

wretches wandered about the streets. As long as this state of things lasted, Wesley made distributions of warm broth to all who came to the Foundery. His liberality was almost proverbial, and equalled his disinterestedness. A young lady, belonging to a rich family, had been greatly blessed through his means, and, when she died, she left him a carriage and a pair of horses with one thousand pounds. But the money did not long remain in his hands. He used to say, "I am God's steward for the poor."[1]

And the poor had the whole of the legacy. Thomas Olivers, one of the preachers, could say of him, "hundreds and thousands are for ever draining Mr. Wesley's pockets to the last shilling, as those about him are eye-witnesses."[2]

With a heart that pitied all kinds of suffering, Wesley, of course, gave a more special attention to the spiritual state of his societies, by which he was looked upon as a father. He deplored their slow progress; he pointed out to them their faults and defects with a sincerity that sometimes seemed harsh to them; he worked ceaselessly with a view to make them fitter for their glorious task. He visited the members from house to house, and insisted that his preachers should do the same. He unhesitatingly blotted out from the lists of members those who refused to submit to the discipline and to meet in class. He assembled the societies wherever he went, and then gave advice to every member, warning or reproving, according as his or her special condition required. He would go into details, and was not afraid to call things by their names. In Ireland he denounced dirt and slovenliness as incompatible with true piety. In Cornwall and Wales

[1] *Works*, vol. xii. p. 288. Tyerman, vol. ii. p. 589.
[2] Olivers, *Rod for a Reviler*. Tyerman, vol. ii. p. 388.

he made diligent search, in order to find out whether there were not among the Methodists any remains of the old piratical and smuggling practices. In London and elsewhere, several members having, by degrees and by their activity, secured a competency, or even a fortune, he vigorously attacked the evils that generally attend prosperity: worldliness, pride, diminution of piety in the families, etc. In order to cure evils, he did not begin by treating them as though they did not exist, neither did he try to extenuate them. The following picture which he drew, in 1766, of the state in which he found his societies, will show that he did not want to flatter them, and that he was under no delusion as to the imperfections from which they suffered.

"I cannot but know more of the state of the Methodist preachers and people than any other person. The world says: 'The Methodists are no better than other people.' This is not true. Yet it is nearer the truth than we are willing to imagine. Personal religion is amazingly superficial amongst us. How little faith there is amongst us, how little communion with God! How little living in heaven, walking in eternity, deadness to every creature! How much love of the world! desire of pleasure, of ease, of praise, of getting money! How little brotherly love! What continual judging one another! What gossiping, evil speaking, tale-bearing! What want of moral honesty! What servants, journeymen, labourers, carpenters, bricklayers do as they would be done by? Which of them does as much work as he can? Set him down for a knave that does not. Who does as he would be done by, in buying and selling, particularly in selling horses? Write him knave that does not: and the Methodist knave is the worst of all knaves. Family religion is shamefully wanting, and almost in every branch. And the

Methodists in general will be little better till we take quite another course with them; for what avails preaching alone, though we could preach like angels!"[1]

A man who could thus faithfully mark what were weak points in the vast work he had established had the requisite gifts for a religious reformer: clear-sightedness and sincerity. Let us add, that if he saw the evil and denounced it, he also knew what was the cure; and he never failed, in his yearly Conferences, to remind his preachers of these things.

But if a proof was wanted that Methodism, in spite of the imperfections of many of its adherents, was still vigorous, it would be found in the fact that, at that time, it began to spread outside Great Britain. The close of the period we are now contemplating was marked by an event of great importance, namely, the introduction of Methodism into America.

The workings of Providence are especially noticeable in the foundation of a Church which had so great a future before it. A few Irish emigrants, who had received the gospel through the instrumentality of Methodism, landed at New York in 1760: a second detachment arrived a little later. Deprived of all religious privileges, they soon lapsed into indifference. Happily, however, among these families there was one woman, Barbara Heck, in whom the hallowed fire burned with an ardour not to be damped by worldly influences. One day, when several of the emigrants were playing at cards, she came abruptly into the room, and, filled with holy indignation, seized the pack of cards and threw it in the fire, at the same time adding some serious admonitions. She then went to the house of Philip Embury, who had been a local preacher in his native country, and, earnestly exhorting him to conquer

[1] Minutes of Conference, 1766. Tyerman, vol. ii. p. 580.

his natural timidity, she prevailed upon him to begin to hold meetings at his house. The first meeting consisted of five persons only, who formed a class. Gradually this little band of Christians multiplied; religious convictions spread on all sides, and it became necessary to open a place of worship. Soon after an English local preacher, called Captain Webb, who had been sent to America on military duty, encouraged the newly organised society by his presence and help. The powerful sermons of this preacher in uniform created a sensation in the country, and were the means of bringing about a Revival. All the places in which meetings were held became too small, and a chapel was built and dedicated to the service of God in 1768. Step by step Methodism extended over various parts of Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Maryland, and Virginia, everywhere following the openings of Providence, and gathering strength without any external help.

By this time the various American congregations felt the want of a closer connection with the parent society at home. A pressing appeal was accordingly addressed to Wesley, and at the Conference of 1769 the question was asked, "Who is willing to go?" Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor offered themselves. To defray the expenses of the voyage, a collection was made among the preachers; and these men, who were often themselves in want of the necessaries of life, contributed seventy pounds towards the establishment of this first Methodist mission. On their arrival at New York, the two missionaries found an organised society, consisting of about a hundred members, and a chapel capable of accommodating seven hundred persons, which was already so inadequate to the wants of the people that many of the meetings were held in the open air. "There appears," says one of the newly arrived

preachers, "such a willingness to hear the Word of God in America as I never saw before."

Such was the beginning of the work which was to expand to such marvellous dimensions. In many respects it was a timely movement. Whitefield, whose energies had been divided between the Old World and the New, and who had done much to revive the Independent Churches in America, died there in the very year in which Wesley's preachers commenced their mission. Incomparable as were his oratorical talents and his gifts as an evangelist, he was wholly destitute of the organising faculty, and could not weld into a solid system the elements that had been fused under his powerful preaching. The strong and wise administration of Wesley was to remedy this defect, and to gather into the bonds of a well-organised community a multitude of souls won from indifference and worldly-mindedness.

The news of Whitefield's death filled the mind of his great fellow-labourer with profound grief. He was deeply touched when he learned that one of his friend's last requests was that he should preach his funeral sermon. This request he complied with, and in the tabernacle reared by Whitefield he pronounced a fitting eulogium on the virtues of the departed.[1] Their early intimacy had long since been restored, and had been deepened by the experience of blessings and trials in which both had shared.

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. vi. p. 167.

CHAPTER VI

ORGANISATION AND DISCIPLINE

More than thirty years had now passed since the commencement of the Methodist Revival in England, and fully five-and-twenty since the first Conference, which had established its unity and laid the foundations of its ecclesiastical system. In the interval that system had been developed slowly and without any serious check, in accordance with those providential indications which Wesley was so careful to follow. The successive additions thus made to the framework of Methodism we shall now briefly describe.

In Wesley's view, as well as in that of his fellow-labourers, the Revival, which they had been so largely instrumental in bringing about, was rather a return to the doctrines and practice of the gospel than an ecclesiastical reform. Questions of organisation with them were only of secondary importance, and were valued mainly as they bore upon the salvation of souls and the progress of the Christian life. It was this idea that ruled the early Conferences. Composed of Wesley's preachers, together with those of the clergy who were favourable to the movement, besides a few friends of Whitefield's, and at times a few laymen, these first Conferences were occupied, in the first place, in defining the doctrines they taught: justification, sanctification, and the witness of the Spirit formed the subjects of

interesting discussions the results of which are embodied in the Minutes subsequently published. Wesley's views on certain doctrines differed from those of some of his contemporaries, and hence arose the necessity for the luminous exposition which they thus received at his hands. Throughout this second stage of Methodism, his opinions had undergone no change, save that they had become clearer and stronger as years rolled by.

On the other hand, his views in reference to the organisation of his societies, and their connection with the Established Church, were greatly modified by the course of events. We have already seen that Wesley commenced his labours in the hope that a cordial understanding might soon be arrived at between the clergy and himself. Everything tended to increase his desire for such a union—his family traditions, the cast of his mind, his natural sympathies, and even the interest of the work itself; and bitter experience alone disabused him of his generous illusions. It is interesting to trace this gradual revolution in Wesley's ecclesiastical views.

In his first Conference, composed in part of clergymen, he boldly defends the rights of Christian liberty against the extravagant pretensions of the episcopate. At the second Conference, held in 1745, to the question, "Is not the will of our governors a law?" he replies categorically, "No; not of any governor, temporal or spiritual. Therefore, if any bishop wills that I should not preach the gospel, his will is no law to me. . . . I am to obey God rather than man."

The right of independent action, thus clearly announced, Wesley had already exercised for many years; to him it was a practical necessity before it became an ecclesiastical theory. This independence was, however, coexistent with certain prejudices which sprang from his

early education: he still believed in the dogma of apostolical succession, and he defended the Anglican episcopalianism. Still, his opinions wavered even now on all these points. Lord King's work on the Primitive Church appears to have contributed largely to the progress of his view. "In spite of the vehement prejudice of my education," he says in 1746, "I was ready to believe that this was a fair and impartial draught; but if so, it would follow that bishops and presbyters are (essentially) of one order, and that originally every Christian congregation was a Church independent of all others."

The principles here somewhat doubtfully affirmed were adopted unhesitatingly at the Conference in 1747. Wesley then declared that a national Church is "a merely political institution," and in reply to the question, "In what age was the divine right of Episcopacy first asserted in England?" he replies, "About the middle of Queen Elizabeth's reign. Till then, all the bishops and clergy in England continually allowed and joined in the ministrations of those who were not episcopally ordained." He also held that the Church might modify its organisation as time and circumstances required, without being under any obligation to find a pattern for every detail in the Church of the apostolic age. So strong, however, was his desire to maintain harmony, that he even made certain concessions which might have proved greatly detrimental to the success of the work which God had committed to him. Hence, this same year he endeavoured to fix some limit to the development of the lay ministry, that it might give less umbrage to the clergy; and, still out of regard to their susceptibilities, recommended his assistants to preach, without forming new societies, for a year, as a trial. These perilous concessions, however, were far from

satisfying his opponents, and at the same time threatened the dissolution of the work; they were therefore soon abandoned. Besides, the clergy themselves, by their blind opposition, seemed determined to remove Wesley's last scruples, and to destroy all the prestige of that authority which he had been wont to revere.

The societies themselves now began to be conscious of their strength, and to agitate a grave question which created enormous embarrassment until the time came—and it was long before it did come—for its final solution.

While the societies had their religious wants supplied by the ministrations of the lay-preachers, for the Sacraments they were obliged to go to the Anglican clergy. These were not only generally opposed to Methodism, but were frequently men of no piety and of doubtful morality; it is no wonder, therefore, that pious persons scrupled to receive the sacred elements from the hand that was raised to encourage the mob. It not seldom happened that they were repelled from the Lord's Table, where scandalous sinners were received without question. Wesley himself, as we have seen, had endured such treatment.

Troubled thus by the annoyances to which they were exposed, the societies at last demanded the administration of the Sacraments by their own preachers; but for a long time their request was not complied with. In 1754 several of the preachers, such as Thomas Walsh and Edward and Charles Perronet, yielded to the solicitations of their flocks, and took upon them to administer the Lord's Supper. This circumstance was widely reported, and occasioned considerable controversy among the societies. The Conference of 1755, at which no less than sixty-three preachers were present, found it necessary to take some decisive action. The question

was stated in all its breadth: it was, whether they ought to separate from the Established Church; for all felt that this was the real bearing of what had taken place. After a dispassionate and thorough debate, continued for three whole days, it was agreed by the Conference, that, "whether it was lawful or not, it was no ways *expedient*." Walsh and his friends consented, for peace sake, to refrain from administering the Sacraments. Wesley admired their spirit, but acknowledged that he "could not answer their arguments." In a letter to his brother Charles, who was quite hostile to these innovations, Wesley wrote: "If, as my lady says, all outward establishments are Babel, so is this establishment. Let it stand, for me; I neither set it up nor pull it down. But let you and me build up the city of God." [1]

In 1758 Wesley published his *Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England*, a pamphlet remarkable for its moderation and good sense. In it he justifies his attachment to the Established Church, an attachment as disinterested as it was ill-requited. So he found it to be in 1764, when, renewing his previous efforts, he addressed a circular letter to "fifty or sixty" evangelical clergymen, to invite them not to make concessions on any doctrinal point, but simply to endeavour after a more active co-operation in the work of reviving practical piety. This manifesto was treated with silent neglect: three clergymen alone were at the pains to answer it. About twelve, however, met him for a new conference; but they proposed a plan by which the Establishment would have entirely absorbed Methodism, and, under the pretence of embracing it, would have crushed out its very life.

Wesley was grieved to see that, in these debates, his brother made common cause with those who counselled the

[1] 28th June 1755.

sacrifice of the organisation by means of which Methodism had achieved its success. He now fully understood that he must no longer entertain the hope of any assistance from the regular clergy, and decided to pursue the work of his life without seeking their co-operation.

The question of the administration of the Sacraments was still undecided, but it was necessary that in some way the wishes of the societies should be met. Besides the direct assistance of a few of the clergy, Wesley had obtained espiscopal ordination for some of his fellow-labourers. The Bishop of Londonderry, who encouraged Wesley's labours in Ireland, had laid hands on Thomas Maxfield, saying as he did so: "Sir, I ordain you to assist that holy man, that he may not kill himself with excessive labour." By Maxfield's defection, narrated earlier, Wesley lost this assistance. In 1761 a prelate of the Greek Church, Bishop Erasmus, visited England, and was so much interested in the Methodist movement that he consented to ordain some of Wesley's preachers. This matter created a great commotion, and Wesley's action was severely judged.

The apparent indecision of Wesley's mind in reference to the Establishment has been criticised with great severity: he has been accused of having placed his people in a false position through excessive reverence for the Anglican Church. It is certain that, to an advanced period of his life, Wesley could not bear the idea of breaking with the Church to which he was attached by so many ties: that Church might abuse and disown him, but he retained for her the deepest affection; and, even in his last days, he manifested returns of sympathy and tenderness that surprise us. But in this we see proofs of a delicacy of sentiment which sheds a vivid light upon his character. He was one of those men who entertain a deep reverence for what is old.

In the presence of a decrepit Church, he displays the sublime modesty of a child, who respects the majesty of a father even though he be so degraded as to be unworthy of the name. He might perhaps have better served his own interests, and those of his Connexion, had he from the first raised the flag of independence: he would thereby have gained a definite position, and spared himself much strife, but it is doubtful whether he would have been more useful. We should have recognised in him a more marked individuality; but perhaps we should not have had to contemplate a character so exquisitely pure.

No longer reckoning on union with the Anglican Church, Wesley devoted his energies to the task of consolidating the bonds which united the societies to their preachers, and united the preachers among themselves. Though the great question of the Sacraments was not yet solved, a solution was easy to be foreseen from the very existence of a popular ministry. Its rights might be withheld for a season through excessive deference to established order, but were sure to be attained sooner or later by the mere force of circumstances. During the period we have now been reviewing, this body of preachers acquired such a compactness and unity that it could well afford patiently to await the future.

We have seen how, at his first Conference, Wesley declared that he only employed lay-preachers "in cases of necessity"; and for a long time he continued to regard their vocation as merely provisional and temporary. The course of events led him to form a different judgment, and he now laboured with all his might to impress upon this institution a permanent and definite character. At the third Conference the following grave question was proposed: "How shall we try those who believe they are moved by the Holy Ghost, and called of God to preach?" The answer is, "Inquire,—1. Do they know

in whom they have believed? Have they the love of God in their hearts? Do they desire and seek nothing but God? And are they holy in all manner of conversation? 2. Have they gifts (as well as grace) for the work? Have they (in some tolerable degree) a clear, sound understanding? Have they a right judgment in the things of God? Have they a just conception of salvation by faith? And has God given them any degree of utterance? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly? 3. Have they success? . . . Have any received remission of sins by their preaching?"

These inquiries were the first of a series of examinations which Wesley instituted into the qualifications of such as desired to enter the ranks of the itinerant ministry. These were only received by the Conference after having been subjected to a searching ordeal, accompanied by solemn fasting and prayer. The year that followed their entrance upon the work was considered as one of probation, and the following Conference came to a definite conclusion respecting them. The final admission took place without any ceremony: the candidate was simply set apart for the work by the prayers of his brethren. In this respect, however, Wesley reserved his right of action, and declared that he only postponed for the present a more formal mode of consecration. "We would not make haste," said he; "we desire barely to follow Providence, as it gradually opens."

Though Wesley regarded the religious life of his fellow-labourers as the primary qualification, he by no means overlooked their intellectual development. From the first he drew up for them a regular course of study and of systematic reading. He never ceased to stimulate them to diligence, urging them to rise at four o'clock in the morning, as he did himself, that they

might find time to prosecute their studies as well as their missionary labours.

At the Conference in 1766, Wesley, after a serious conversation on the subject, gave the following advice, which was published in the Minutes :—

"Why are we not more knowing? Because we are idle. We forget the very first rule: 'Be diligent; never be unemployed a moment. Never be triflingly employed. Never while away time, neither spend any more time at any place than is strictly necessary.' I fear there is altogether a fault in this matter, and that few of us are clear. Which of you spends as many hours a day in *God's work* as you did formerly in *man's work*? We talk, talk,—or read history, or what comes next to hand. We must, absolutely must, cure this evil, or give up the whole work.

"But how? Spend all the morning, or at least five hours in twenty-four, in reading the *most useful books*, and that regularly and constantly. 'But I read only the Bible.' Then you ought to teach others to read only the Bible, and, by parity of reason, to *hear only the Bible*. But if so, you need preach no more. Just so said George Bell; and what is the fruit? Why, now he neither reads the Bible nor anything else. This is rank enthusiasm. If you need no book but the Bible, you are got above St. Paul. He wanted others too. 'But I have *no taste* for reading.' Contract a taste for it by use, or return to your trade. 'But different men have different tastes.' Therefore some may read less than others; but none should read less than this. 'But I have no books.' I will give each of you, as fast as you will read them, books to the value of five pounds, and I desire the assistants will take care that all the large societies provide the Christian Library for the use of the preachers." [1]

[1] Minutes of the Conference. Tyerman, vol. ii. p. 582.

In the same document Wesley advised his preachers to reserve the afternoon for pastoral visitation: "Go into *every house* in course, and teach *every one* therein, young and old, if they belong to us, to be Christians inwardly and outwardly. Make every particular plain to their understanding. Fix it in their memory. Write it on their heart."

The spiritual care of the lambs of the flock had a special place in those admonitions of Wesley to his assistants.

"Over and above, where there are ten children in a society, spend at least an hour with them twice a week; and do this, not in a dull, dry, formal manner, but in earnest, with your might. 'But I have no gift for this.' Gift or no gift, you are to do it, else you are not called to be a Methodist preacher. Do it as you can, till you can do it as you would. Pray earnestly for the gift, particularly studying the children's tracts."

Wesley went into minute and very practical details as to the best way to fulfil that part of their duty.

"Hear what the children have learnt by heart. Choose some of the weightiest points, and try, by further questions, how far they understand them. Often, with the question, suggest the answer. Before you leave them, engage the head of each family to call all his family every Sunday, before they go to bed, and hear what they can rehearse, and so continue until they have learned all 'The Instructions' perfectly."

If any one objected that it was impossible to attend to both study and pastoral work at the same time, he replied: "Gaining knowledge is a good thing; but saving souls is a better. By this very thing you will gain the most excellent knowledge of God and eternity. You will have abundant time for gaining other knowledge too, if you spend all your mornings therein. Only,

sleep not more than you need, talk not more than you need, and never be idle or trifling employed. If you can do but one, let your studies alone. I would throw by all the libraries in the world, rather than be guilty of the perdition of one soul." [1]

When we read such advice given by Wesley to his preachers, we cannot but feel how earnest was the spirit that dictated it. These instructions help us also to understand how strong was his purpose to extract from the use of a lay ministry all the results that could possibly be expected.

In order to keep his preachers in good practice, and to prevent their wearing themselves out by constant preaching in the same places, Wesley required them to change their circuits frequently. The Conference of 1767 systematised these changes, and rendered them obligatory. It was agreed, "That the same preacher shall not be sent, ordinarily above one, never above two years together." At a later period the term was extended to three years.

The preachers were genuine models of self-denial. If they did not take the vow of poverty on entering the itinerant ministry, they practised a voluntary course of self-renunciation that was never excelled by the followers of St. Francis. One of the rules was, "Take no money of any one. If they give you food when you are hungry, or clothes when you need them, it is good, but not silver or gold. Let there be no pretence to say we grow rich by the gospel." Receiving their daily supplies from the society, the first preachers were only paid in money enough to defray their travelling expenses, and these were sufficiently modest, the greater part performing their journeys on foot. One of them, John Jane, in that way travelled from Bristol to Holyhead,

[1] Minutes of the Conference. Tyerman, vol. ii. p. 582.

in order to join Wesley, having only three shillings in his pocket when he started; and even this small sum exceeded the actual expenses of the journey, owing to the hospitality he everywhere met with on his way. On his death his property was sold to meet his funeral expenses, and the proceeds of the sale were insufficient for the purpose, although these expenses did not amount to forty shillings altogether. "All the money he had was one shilling and fourpence." Wesley, who states these facts, adds, "Enough for any unmarried preacher of the gospel to leave to his executors."

All the travelling preachers were not disposed, however, like the brother in question, to remain single all their days; and those who married suffered great privations. Many were even compelled to retire from the active work of the ministry, that they might find means to support their families. The Conference of 1752 saw the necessity of remedying this state of things, and recommended that the societies should, for the future, pay each preacher the annual sum of twelve pounds. This recommendation remained a dead letter in many instances; and thirteen years later, in 1765, the York society actually sent a deputation to the Conference, to request that they might be exempted from the necessity of paying their preacher this "large" sum.

With societies so poor, and in certain cases so wanting in liberality, the preachers would, many of them, have been in danger of starving to death, if they had not carried on some secular business in conjunction with their evangelical labours; several of them were compelled to labour with their hands in the daytime, while they devoted their evenings to their ministerial work. Such a division of their energies was no degradation, sanctioned as it has been by the example of

St. Paul; but it was necessarily detrimental to their ministry, inasmuch as they could only devote to it a limited portion of their time and strength. The Conference of 1768 took cognisance of this fact, and agreed that, for the future, itinerant preachers should be entirely set apart to their holy work, and depend wholly for their support on God and His Church.

The year following it was resolved that each preacher's wife should receive ten pounds *per annum*, and that the circuits should contribute according to their means toward the support of the wives, whether married or single preachers were appointed to them. The number of wives provided for was, that same year, thirty-one. A similar resolution was passed later in reference to the children of preachers; and their sons found, in the school established by Wesley at Kingswood, a well-ordered institution where they received a Christian education, the cost of which was borne in part by the societies. Thus Wesley endeavoured to relieve his fellow-labourers of the worldly cares, which could not but militate against their efficiency.

The usefulness of these humble servants of God had vastly increased during the period we have been narrating, and it was to them Methodism owed its surprising extension. It is not our province to sketch, however briefly, their remarkable labours. Suffice it to state that such men as Nelson, Walsh, Hopper, Haime, Staniforth, Taylor, and Wright, rendered incalculable service to the work of the Revival.[1] They had not received the ecclesiastical ordination; but the approbation of God manifestly resting upon their labours was the best seal to their ministry, and the best answer to the contempt of the world.

If Wesley recognised the hand of Providence in the

[1] Concerning those devoted workmen, details will be found in *The Early Methodist Preachers*, edited by Thomas Jackson, 6 vols., 1865.

establishment of this popular pastorate, its rapid enlargement and success continually strengthened that conviction. He endeavoured to give this institution a firm and solid basis. While he strove to raise its intellectual standard, and to inspire it with the true spirit of its mission, he also considered how he might best perpetuate its existence. The great preacher had arrived at old age, and might at any time be taken to his reward. Till his death, he must of necessity continue to be the living centre and effectual bond of this already powerful organisation; but prudence required that measures should be adopted in anticipation of the time when the bond should be broken.

This grave question occupied the attention of the Conference of 1769. Wesley proposed that at his death the preachers should nominate a kind of supreme council composed of three, five, or seven preachers, each of whom should in turn act as moderator, and under this title perform the functions that had devolved upon himself.[1] This plan, which was open to serious objections, was subsequently modified; that which was ultimately adopted will be considered in its proper place.

While the teaching body in Methodism was thus rapidly increasing, the societies also made proportionate progress. In 1770 they numbered 29,406 members, scattered over the whole country, and already possessing a great number of chapels.

Their organisation was gradually completed, retaining all the while the distinctive features which characterised it at the outset. The class-meeting was still the pivot of the whole society. From the year 1765 the custom became general, of periodically giving each member a ticket, which served as a certificate of membership.

[1] Smith, *History of Wesleyan Methodism*, vol. i. p. 356.

So early as 1746, or even earlier, the whole field was divided into circuits, each occupying the labours of one or more preachers; and from year to year, as the Revival spread and the number of the agents increased, the circuits multiplied in number and diminished in extent.

The Conference of 1749 resolved, that in each circuit quarterly meetings should be held, whose business it should be to care for the local interests of the work of God. The various means of religious edification were adopted one by one. In 1749 watch-nights and love-feasts began to be held monthly. In 1755 Wesley introduced a special service, known by the name of the Renewal of the Covenant, the object of which is to bind the members to the service of God by an act of formal self-consecration. Days for fasting and prayer were also frequently observed throughout the societies. Thus the societies had a great variety of stimulating and edifying ordinances, which could not but tend to the establishment of the people in the grace of God.

Thanks to his powerful genius as an organiser, Wesley had wrought his societies into a homogeneous whole. That of itself guaranteed the stability and permanence of the work. Many questions, however, remained unsettled, and these occupied the thoughts of the great missionary during his last years. Despite the energy of his spirit, he at times felt almost overwhelmed by the weight of his responsibility. "Preaching twice or thrice a day," he wrote, "is no burden to me at all; but the care of all the preachers and all the people is a burden indeed!" That burden Wesley could no doubt have lightened by sharing it with others, and it was suggested on more than one side. Some people accused him of being the autocrat of Methodism. He fully met that criticism at the Leeds Conference in 1766. He endeavoured to show by facts that it was Providence had

placed him in the situation where he was, and, he added: "I did not seek any part of this power; it came upon me unawares; but when it was come, not daring to bury that talent, I used it to the best of my judgment. Yet I never was fond of it: I always did, and do now, bear it as my burden, the burden which God lays upon me, and therefore I dare not yet lay it down. But if you can tell me any one, or any five men, to whom I may transfer this burden, who *can* and *will* do just what I do now, I will heartily thank both them and you."[1]

The middle period of Wesley's ministry closes with the Conference of 1770. This Conference occupies, indeed, an important place in the history of Methodism. It recorded the commencement of Methodist labours in the field of foreign missions, since this year for the first time America figures in the list of circuits. This Conference also gave the signal for the last great Calvinistic controversy. This year also, upon the field of battle, Whitefield fell, Wesley's great coadjutor, and the only man of the century who equalled him. Wesley alone now remains at his post, with as valiant a heart as ever, carrying on his great life-work through the last years of a green old age.

[1] Tyerman, vol. ii. p. 578.

Book Fourth

THE EVENING OF LIFE
(1770–1791)

CHAPTER I

THE CALVINISTIC CONTROVERSY

(1770–1777)

THE last period of John Wesley's life covers a space of twenty years, a time when he worked quite as much as he had ever done in the past. And yet he had now reached old age. Right bravely did he bear his three-score years and seven at the moment we are now describing. But death alone was to be for him the harbinger of rest. Although his white locks betokened the beginning of the winter of life, still he was allowed to enjoy till the end a perpetual summer, thanks to his vigorous health and his peculiarly warm heart.

We might wish the old age of this great servant of God had been as free from struggles as it was from infirmities. It would be refreshing to find peace surrounding him on all sides at eventime. But this was not to be the case, at least during the early years of the period. The eighteenth century Revival, like the sixteenth century Reformation, was agitated by intestinal warfare which seemed, by revealing their weaknesses, to cloud the character of the men who had accomplished these great things, but happily did not succeed in defeating the glorious work God had wrought through them.

Thirty years before, the controversy between the

advocates of Calvinistic predestination, and those who rejected that doctrine, had caused a schism in the Methodist ranks; but the controversy had more or less been suspended in the interval. This result was owing to the influence of Whitefield, who turned all his zeal and earnestness towards the missionary work he was pursuing, and thus put a curb on the impatience of some of his followers. But when he died, the hostilities were resumed.

This new campaign had even begun, in some sort, a few months before Whitefield's decease. A young minister of the Church of England, Augustus Toplady, had published two pamphlets:[1] one of them vindicating his Church from the suspicion of leaning to Arminianism; the second, intended as a plea for the doctrine of unconditional election, and based upon a Latin book by Zanchius (Girolomo Zanchi), an Italian theologian of the sixteenth century, who appears to have been a staunch Calvinist. An answer to these writings was made by Walter Sellon, who, after being a teacher in Kingswood School, had become a clergyman, but remained a steadfast friend of Wesley: he had already done the same service when Hervey's posthumous letters appeared.

Wesley himself entered the lists, and published two tracts at the beginning of the year 1770. One of them, in twelve pages, answered the question, "What is an Arminian?"[2] Wesley explained, with proofs drawn from history, what was the meaning of that designation, concerning which he writes: "To say, 'This man is an Arminian,' has the same effect on many hearers as to

[1] *Church of England vindicated from the Charge of Arminianism*, and *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination stated and asserted.*

[2] *The Question: What is an Arminian? answered by a Lover of Free Grace.*

say, 'This is a mad dog.'" Further on he says: "The errors charged upon these (usually termed *Arminians*) by their opponents are five: (1) that they deny original sin; (2) that they deny justification by faith; (3) that they deny absolute predestination; (4) that they deny the grace of God to be irresistible; and (5) that they affirm a believer may fall from grace. With regard to the two first of these charges, they plead, Not guilty. They are entirely false. No man that ever lived, not John Calvin himself, ever asserted either original sin or justification by faith in more strong, more clear and express terms, than Arminius has done. These two points, therefore, are to be set out of the question: in these both parties agree. In this respect there is not a hair's breadth difference between Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield."[1]

After explaining, in a very luminous manner, the views of Arminians on the three questions on which they differ from the Calvinists, the author concludes by paying a tribute of admiration to the piety of both Calvin and Arminius, entreating their followers henceforth to desist from using the names of those eminent Christians "as terms of reproach, seeing it is neither better nor worse than calling names, a practice no more consistent with good sense or good manners than it is with Christianity."[2]

The second tract by Wesley[3] appeared about the same time, and was a summary of Zanchi's book, from the translation by Toplady. But that summary was plainly a *reductio ad absurdum* (a reducing to an absurdity), although it was not Wesley's fault if the doctrines proclaimed by Toplady appeared so shocking

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. x. p. 359. [2] P. 361.

[3] *The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination stated and asserted by the Rev. Mr. A. T.*

when put in plain language. This is how the tract concluded:—

"The sum of all is this: One in twenty (suppose) of mankind are elected; nineteen in twenty are reprobated. The elect shall be saved, do what they will; the reprobate shall be damned, do what they can. Reader, believe this, or be damned.

"Witness my hand,

"A. T."[1]

At the beginning of this tract Wesley inscribed a short introduction, which must be quoted:—

"It is granted that the ensuing tract is, in good measure, a translation. Nevertheless, considering the unparalleled modesty and self-diffidence of the young translator, and the tenderness wherewith he treats his opponents, it may well pass for an original."[2]

This ironical preface was intended not to leave anyone uncertain as to the end the author had in view, as well as to the origin of the pamphlet. Undoubtedly, Wesley was in his right when he had recourse to this means of answering his young and not over-modest assailant. But the latter became seriously angry, and poured out his wrath in one of the most insulting writings that ever appeared.[3]

This young man, who a few years before used most respectful and almost filial language in his letters to Wesley, now dared to tell him, that "for more than thirty years past he has been endeavouring to palm on his credulous followers his pernicious doctrines, with all the sophistry of a Jesuit and the dictatorial authority of a pope." Wesley was even traduced by him as

[1] *Works*, vol. xiv. p. 198. [2] P. 190.

[3] *A letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, relative to his pretended Abridgment of Zanchius on Predestination*

"acting the ignoble part of a lurking, sly assassin." Thirty pages were filled with such abuse.

This was the lamentable beginning of a controversy which lasted more than six years. But Wesley was not the man to follow the champion of Calvinism on such improper ground. He wrote to one of his friends: "Mr. Augustus Toplady I know well: but I do not fight with chimney-sweepers. He is too dirty a writer for me to meddle with; I would only foul my fingers. I read his title-page, and troubled myself no further. I leave him to Mr. Sellon. He cannot be in better hands."[1]

In 1770 the Conference, at the request of Wesley, approved a doctrinal statement which was the real beginning of the great contest, whilst the foregoing pamphlets had only been skirmishes. That statement, which served as a pretext for the most violent charges, deserves to be printed here in full:—

"We said in 1744, 'We have leaned too much toward Calvinism.' Wherein?

"With regard to man's faithfulness. Our Lord Himself taught us to use the expression, and therefore we ought never to be ashamed of it. We ought steadily to assert, upon His authority, that if a man is not faithful in the unrighteous mammon, God will not give him the true riches.

"With regard to working for life, which our Lord expressly commands us to do: 'Labour (ἐργάζεσθε),' that is work, 'for the meat that endureth to everlasting life.' And, in fact, every believer, till he comes to glory, works for, as well as from, life.

"We have received it as a maxim, that a man is to do nothing in order to justification. Nothing can be more false. Whoever desires to find favour with God

[1] Tyerman, vol. iii. p. 83.

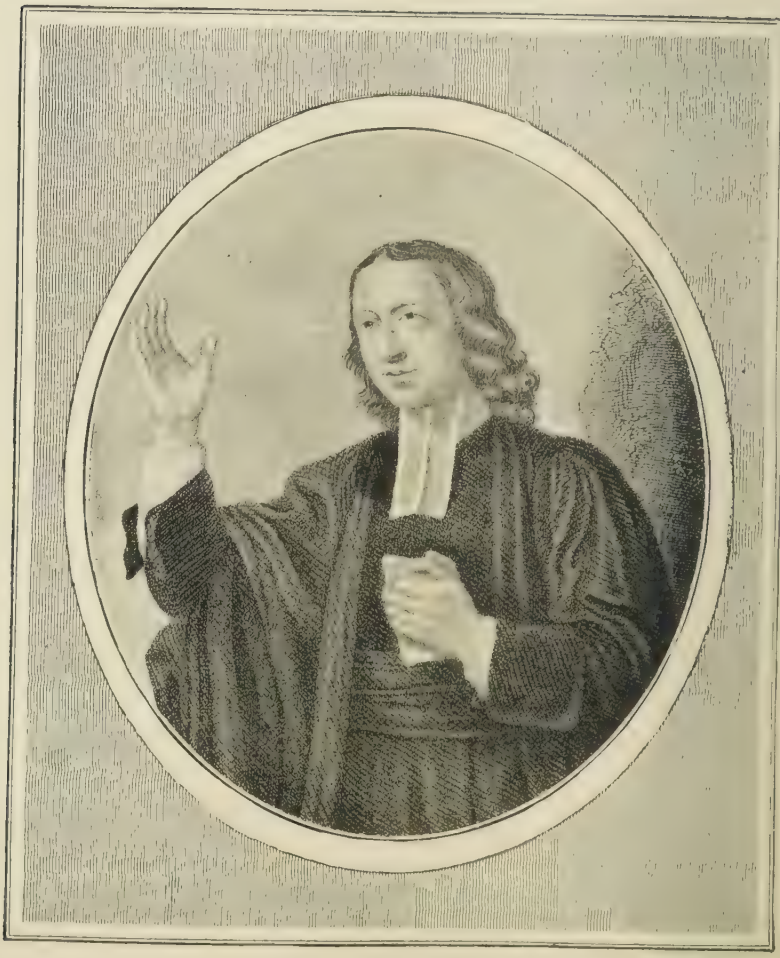
should cease from evil, and learn to do well. So God Himself teaches by the Prophet Isaiah. Whosoever repents should do works meet for repentance. And if this is not in order to find favour, what does he do them for?

"Once more review the whole affair. Who of us is now accepted of God? He that now believes in Christ with a loving, obedient heart. But who among those that never heard the gospel? He that, according to the light he has, feareth God and worketh righteousness. Is this the same with, He that is sincere? Nearly, if not quite. Is not this salvation by works? Not by merit of works, but by works as a condition. What, then, have we been disputing about for these thirty years? I am afraid, about words; namely, in some of the foregoing instances.

"As to merit itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid: We are rewarded according to our works, yea, because of our works. How does this differ from, 'for the sake of our works'? And how differs this from *secundum merita operum*? which is no more than, 'as our works deserve.' Let him that can, split the hair.

"The grand objection to one of the preceding propositions is drawn from matter of fact: God does, in fact, justify those who, by their own confession, neither feared God nor wrought righteousness. Is this an exception to the general rule? It is a doubt whether God makes any exception at all. But how are we sure that the person in question never did fear God and work righteousness? His own thinking so is no proof. For we know how all who are convinced of sin undervalue themselves in every respect.

"Does not talking, without proper caution, of a justified or a sanctified state, tend to mislead men;



JOHN WESLEY.
(Painted by Nathaniel Hone.)

almost naturally leading them to trust in what was done in one moment? Whereas we are every moment pleasing or displeasing to God, according to our works; according to the whole of our present inward tempers and outward behaviour."[1]

The end which Wesley had in view when he published this statement was to oppose the Antinomian tendencies, which threatened to ruin the work of the Revival by inducing many people to adopt a lax course of moral principles. In the preceding thirty years Wesley had seen several of his societies devastated by men who, through an exaggerated notion of divine grace, had come to the awful conclusion, "Let us sin, that grace may abound!" In his anxiety to decline all solidarity with such pernicious doctrines, Wesley worded his own views in a manner that his best friend, John Fletcher, declares "unguarded and not sufficiently explicit."[2] The statement which has just been quoted seems a programme for discussions, rather than a calm and complete exposition of Wesley's belief in regard to salvation through faith. It is in his Sermons that we must seek such an exposition.

At all events, the doctrinal manifesto of the Conference of 1770 highly displeased the followers of Whitefield. Lady Huntingdon, acting under the influence of her impulsive nature, notified to Wesley that she would not henceforth allow him the use of any of her chapels, unless he disavowed such "horrible and abominable" tenets, as she called them.[3] According to her, Wesley had "given up the grand point of the Methodists, free justification, *articulum stantis vel cadentis Ecclesiæ*,"[4] and was guilty of the Pelagian heresy.

[1] *Minutes of Several Conversations*, etc., p. 26.
[2] Tyerman's *Wesley's Designated Successor*, p. 178.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 184. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 177.

A strange accusation indeed, and one which was refuted in the best manner, four months later, by Wesley's funeral discourse on the occasion of Whitefield's death: for in that sermon he powerfully demonstrated that Methodism had never varied from the beginning in regard to the doctrine of justification through faith, and that the most perfect harmony had always subsisted between himself and his friend on that most important question. But when he bore that testimony, it was already too late: the sword had left the scabbard, and it was not soon put back into it. The followers of Whitefield had him no more to restrain them, and engaged with a passionate ardour in this new conflict.

The countess, being fully persuaded that her ultra-Calvinistic theology was the only true one, exacted from all those who were connected with her college at Trevecca, a formal declaration that they rejected Wesley's statement of doctrine. One of the masters, Joseph Benson, refused to do so, and was dismissed. As to John Fletcher, who was the headmaster of the college, he felt his position to be peculiarly embarrassing, situated as he was between Lady Huntingdon on one side, who was anxious to retain a man of such piety and intellectual power, and Wesley on the other side, with whose views he quite sympathised. He had an interview with Lady Huntingdon, whom he used to call "our Deborah," and told her plainly that if "every Arminian must quit the college, he was actually discharged also. For in my present view of things," he added, "I must hold that sentiment (the possibility of salvation for all men; that mercy is offered to all, and yet may be received or rejected), if I believe that the Bible is true, and that God is love."[1]

[1] *Life of J. Fletcher*, by J. Benson, chap. v. p. 24.

At the same time, Fletcher admitted that his friend's doctrinal views had been expressed in an unguarded and not sufficiently explicit manner in the Minutes; but he maintained that his real thoughts on these subjects were well known, and that there could be no mistake about them. He urged the countess and her friends "to set fire to the harvest of the Philistines, and not to that of their fellow-Israelites, who cannot pronounce Shibboleth in their way."[1] But his advice was not listened to, and the Israelites, to use Fletcher's language, fought against each other with a fury that had best have been turned against the Philistines.

The Conference of 1771 was to meet at Bristol in August. It could be foreseen that it would again take up the statement of the year before and explain it. But, instead of waiting for such explanations, which they might even have provoked in a brotherly spirit, the leaders of Calvinistic Methodism followed a most extraordinary course, and indited what was, in fact, an offensive summons. This is the circular they sent to a large number of their friends:—

"SIR,—Whereas Mr. Wesley's Conference is to be held at Bristol, on Tuesday, the 6th of August next, it is proposed by Lady Huntingdon, and many other Christian friends (real Protestants), to have a meeting at Bristol at the same time, of such principal persons, both clergy and laity, who disapprove of the underwritten Minutes. And as the same are thought injurious to the very fundamental principles of Christianity, it is further proposed that they go in a body to the said Conference, and insist upon a formal recantation of the said Minutes; and in case of a refusal, that they sign and publish their protest against

[1] Tyerman, *Wesley's Designated Successor*, p. 178.

them. Your presence, sir, on this occasion, is particularly requested. But if it should not suit your convenience to be there, it is desired that you will transmit your sentiments on the subject to such persons as you think proper to produce them. It is submitted to you, whether it would not be right, in the opposition to be made to such a dreadful heresy, to recommend it to as many of your Christian friends, as well of the Dissenters as of the Established Church, as you can prevail on, to be there, the cause being of so public a nature."[1]

Walter Shirley, a nephew and chaplain of the countess, appended his name to that circular. At a later period he tried to justify their conduct by saying that "they were warmly interested in the revival of spiritual religion and the doctrines of the Reformation"; and that Wesley stood "at the head of near thirty thousand people,—a veteran in the cause of the gospel,—one of the chiefs in the late reformation."[2] But this last argument ought to have led to the adoption of a less offensive and more respectful method of correcting his so-called "dreadful heresy." However, Wesley does not appear to have been either disturbed or offended by the step they had taken, and quietly awaited the effects of the summons which had been served upon him in such a noisy fashion. Shirley's circular letter, which was sent abroad in the three kingdoms, brought to Bristol, after all, just seven or eight persons, and among them were two laymen and two students. Wesley did not choose to object to the irregular character of this self-appointed deputation, and he listened to all they had to say. An explanatory note was agreed to, which he

[1] Preface to John Fletcher's *First Check to Antinomianism.*

[2] Shirley's *Narrative*, p. 5.

signed, with fifty-three of his preachers. It was worded thus:—

"Whereas the doctrinal points in the Minutes of a Conference held in London, August 7th, 1770, have been understood to favour Justification by Works; now the Rev. John Wesley, and others assembled in Conference, do declare that we had no such meaning; and that we abhor the doctrine of Justification by Works as a most perilous and abominable doctrine; and as the said Minutes are not sufficiently guarded in the way they are expressed, we hereby solemnly declare, in the sight of God, that we have no trust or confidence but in the alone merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for Justification or Sanctification either in life, death, or the day of judgment; and though no one is a real Christian believer (and consequently cannot be saved) who doth not good works, where there is time and opportunity, yet our works have no part in meriting or purchasing our salvation from first to last, either in whole or in part."[1]

As to Shirley, he admitted that "he had mistaken the meaning of the doctrinal points in the Minutes of the Conference held in London, August 7th, 1770," and he testified "the full satisfaction he has in the said declaration, and his hearty concurrence and agreement with the same."[2] But, after all, the controversy was very far from being finished; in fact, it had just begun, and was to last for several years.

John Fletcher, who had been strongly moved by the unfair charges brought against his friend Wesley, had prepared a "Vindication of the Minutes,"[3] in the

[1] Shirley's *Narrative*. Tyerman, *Life of Wesley*, vol. iii. p. 100.

[2] Tyerman's *Wesley's Designated Successor*, p. 190.

[3] "A Vindication of the Rev. Mr. Wesley's Minutes, . . . occasioned by a Circular Letter inviting principal persons, both clergy and laity,

shape of letters addressed to Shirley, and he had sent his manuscript to Wesley. The latter at once despatched it to the printer. He thought, with good reason no doubt, that, having been thus heavily accused, he had no right to suppress the public testimony of approval given to him by a man whose religious eminence made him respected everywhere. Wesley has been blamed for publishing this manifesto of Fletcher's, after a reconciliation had been accomplished between the representatives of the two tendencies at the Bristol Conference. But the Antinomian leanings, against which the Minutes had been brought forward as a kind of barrier, still subsisted and threatened the very existence of Wesley's societies. Although he dearly loved peace, he could not, for the sake of it, sacrifice principles. He wrote to Lady Huntingdon:—

"Those letters, which could not be suppressed without betraying the honour of our Lord, largely prove that the Minutes lay no other foundation than which is laid in Scripture, and which I have been laying and teaching others to lay for between thirty and forty years."[1]

When John Fletcher heard of the reconciliation that had taken place at the Bristol Conference, he wrote to his friend, Mr. Ireland, to request him to stop the printing of his Letters. James Ireland was a Calvinistic Methodist, and had signed Shirley's circular. But he had friends on both sides. He exerted himself in order to arrest the publication of Fletcher's pamphlet. But Wesley was travelling in Wales at that moment, and his

as well of the Dissenters as of the Established Church, who disapprove of those Minutes, to oppose them in a body as a dreadful Heresy. . . . In five Letters to the Hon. and Rev. Author of the Circular Letter, by a Lover of Quietness and Liberty of Conscience."

[1] Whitehead's *Life of Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 350.

preachers altogether refused to comply with Ireland's wishes: consequently the book appeared.

Fletcher, however, was not sorry for it when it was done, and he wrote privately to Shirley that, all considered, he acknowledged that "it was a necessary evil." "Whether my Letters were suppressed or not," he added, "the Minutes must be vindicated; Mr. Wesley owed it to the Church, to the real Protestants, to all his societies, and to his own aspersed character. After all, the controversy did not seem to me to be so much whether the Minutes should stand, as whether the Antinomian gospel should prevail over the practical gospel of Jesus Christ."[1]

When John Fletcher's writing appeared, the effect produced was considerable. The author, already favourably known as a Christian and as a preacher, revealed himself in this production as a distinguished writer. Although a foreigner by birth, he used the English language with perfect ease, and in his masterly style, clearness of expression vied with eloquence. His mode of conducting polemics was a novelty, in that it remained dignified, impartial, and even generous, without sacrificing anything of its powerful logic. The pamphlet contained ninety-eight pages, and was divided into three parts: 1st, a general review of the doctrines professed by J. Wesley; 2nd, an exposition of the end he pursued when he issued his Minutes; 3rd, a defence of the various sentiments expressed therein, founded on arguments drawn from Scripture, reason, and experience, but also from the writings of eminent Calvinistic writers.

"These reflections made me, . . ." says Fletcher in the second letter, "consider what we may candidly suppose was Mr. W.'s design in writing these propositions for, and recommending them to, the preachers in connexion

[1] Tyerman's *Wesley's Designated Successor*, p. 194.

with him. And I could not help seeing that it was only to guard them and their hearers against Antinomian principles and practices, which spread like wildfire in some of his societies, where persons who spoke in the most glorious manner of Christ, and their interest in His complete salvation, have been found living in the greatest immoralities, or indulging the most unchristian tempers."

In his fifth letter, which was written, as well as the others, before the reconciliation accomplished at Bristol, he seriously criticised the way in which Shirley and his friends had behaved towards Wesley, in the matter of that circular which displayed such an unfair spirit. "Had those propositions at length appeared to you unsound," he writes, "yea, and had you never maintained them yourself, should you not, as a Christian and a brother, have written to him, acquainted him with your objections, and desired him to solve them and explain himself, or you should be obliged publicly to expose him?

"Was this condescension more than was due from you, sir, and our other friends, to a grey-headed minister of Christ, an old general in the armies of Emmanuel, a father who has children capable of instructing even masters in Israel, and one whom God made the first and principal instrument of the late revival of internal religion in our Church?

"Instead of this friendly method, as if you was a Barak, 'commanded by the Lord God of Israel, you call together the children of Naphtali and Zebulon.' You convene from England and Wales, clergy and laity, Churchmen and Dissenters, to meet you at Bristol, where they are, it seems, to be entertained in good and free quarters. And for what grand expedition? Why, on a day appointed, you are to march up 'in a body,' not

to attack Sisera and his iron chariots, but an old Caleb, who, without meddling with you, quietly goes on to the conquest of Canaan. . . . Oh, let it not be told in Rome, lest the sons of the Inquisition rejoice!

"Oh, sir, have we not fightings enough *without* to employ all our time and strength? Must we also declare war and promote fightings *within*? Must we catch at every opportunity to stab one another, because the livery of truth which we wear is not turned up in the same manner? What can be more cruel than this? What can be more cutting to an old minister of Christ, than to be traduced as 'a dreadful heretic' in printed letters sent to the best men in the land, yea, through all England and Scotland, and signed by a person of your rank and piety, to have things that he knows not, that he never meant, laid to his charge, and dispersed far and near? While he is gone to a neighbouring kingdom,[1] to preach Jesus Christ, to have his friends prejudiced, his foes elevated, and the fruit of his extensive ministry at the point of being blasted! Put yourself in his place, sir, and you will see that the wound is deep, and reaches the very heart.

"Our Elijah[2] has lately been translated to heaven. Grey-headed Elisha is yet awhile continued upon earth. And shall we make a hurry and noise, to bring in railing accusations against him with more success? . . . Shall the sons of the prophets, shall even children in grace and knowledge, openly traduce the venerable seer and his abundant labours? When they see him run upon his Lord's errands, shall they cry, not 'Go up, thou bald-head,' but 'Go up, thou heretic'? O, Jesus of Nazareth,

[1] Wesley was in Ireland on a missionary tour, which lasted from 24th March to 22nd July 1771, at the very moment when Shirley sent abroad his offensive circular.

[2] Whitefield, who had died in America on the 30th September 1770.

Thou rejected of men, Thou who wast once called 'a deceiver of the people,' suffer it not! lest the raging bear of persecution come suddenly out of the wood upon those sons of discord, and tear them in pieces."

Shirley replied to Fletcher, by giving an account of the proceedings at Bristol, in which he aimed at showing that the document which Wesley had signed, with fifty-three of his preachers, was a recantation. But the vicar of Madeley could not allow that; and, before the year was ended, he came out with a second, *Check to Antinomianism*; for such was henceforth the title of the series. In this new one he shows from Scripture that man is justified in the present through his faith, but that in the day of judgment he will be justified by his works; and he insists on the necessity of preaching duty, and shows in what state of moral weakness and spiritual decline most of the evangelical Churches of that time had fallen.

Shirley now withdrew from the lists; and others had already engaged in the contest. Two brothers, Richard and Rowland Hill,[1] took part in it with more zeal than wisdom. Richard Hill issued a strange pamphlet, in which he detailed an account of a conversation he had, in Paris, with a monk of an English convent of Benedictines established there, concerning Wesley's Minutes. The monk, it seems, had declared they were "too near Pelagianism," and Richard Hill concluded, in a triumphant way, that "the principles in the extract of the Minutes are too rotten even for a Papist to

[1] The Hill family was of ancient gentry. Richard, the elder of the two brothers, was born in 1733, and at his father's death became Sir Richard Hill. He had become pious by the instrumentality of Methodism, and he devoted himself for several years to the work of evangelisation, without, however, becoming a minister. His brother Rowland, born in 1744, became one of the most popular and original preachers of the Revival. He lived until the year 1833.

rest upon." In the postscript to his second Check, John Fletcher says: "Astonishing! That our opposers should think it worth their while to raise one recruit against us in the immense city of Paris, where fifty thousand might be raised against the Bible itself! So long as Christ, the prophets, and apostles are for us, together with the multitude of the Puritan divines of the last century, we shall smile at an army of popish friars. The knotted whips that hang by their sides will no more frighten us from our Bibles than the *ipse dixit* of a Benedictine monk will make us explode, as heretical, propositions which are demonstrated to be scriptural."

In 1772 Richard Hill addressed to Fletcher five letters,[1] in which the dogma of absolute predestination, which had for some time been rather left in the shade, was warmly defended. This called forth the third Check, in which Fletcher, with close reasoning and fervid eloquence, confutes the Calvinistic views of election and reprobation. At the close, he begs to be pardoned for the outspoken freedom of a Swiss mountaineer, and presumes still further to advise his friends, both Calvinists and Arminians, to use equity and moderation in the judgments they feel called to express on one another.

This advice was far from inopportune. The lengthened controversy soured the tempers of combatants, and soon they passed from arguments to abuse. On the Wesleyan side, these excesses were rare; Wesley's friends having such a champion as John Fletcher, had less occasion to feel tempted to lose their temper: they felt confidence in his strong reasoning, and his fine moderation in controversy was to them an example to follow. We must, however, regret that,

[1] *Five Letters to the Rev. Mr. F——r.*

too often, Walter Sellon and Thomas Olivers did not conform to it. But on the Calvinistic side, it cannot be denied that the tone of the discussion was almost invariably vulgar, and frequent recourse was had to abuse. The brothers Hill and Augustus Toplady were the most conspicuous in this respect, which was not in keeping with their education or piety. Their insults to Wesley and to his friends involved more personal abuse and more calumnious charges than they had ever met from their most bitter enemies. Whilst Rowland Hill reproaches Olivers on his humble origin, his brother likens him to an impertinent "little quadruped, whom he would not stop to lash, or even order his footman to lash, with his whip." Toplady and the two Hills, after behaving for some time with moderation towards John Fletcher, whose perfect courtesy ought to have conciliated even the most irascible opponent, made now no distinction between him and his friends, but used him in just the same way as they did others. But Wesley had the privilege of receiving the most furious assaults given by the Predestinarians. "Pope John, Jesuit, Pelagian, Manichean, heathen, old fox," etc., such were a few of the compliments they bestowed for several years upon an old man of seventy, whose life had been wholly devoted to God and to the good of mankind. They were but young men comparatively; and it is not to be doubted but they were sincere Christians, and zealous for the spread of the Revival. If ever the *odium theologicum* appeared despicable and repulsive, it was in some of the writings inspired by this controversy.

But what had Wesley done to justify such violent anger? His share in the Calvinistic controversy consists solely of the imperfectly worded manifesto of the Conference of 1770, and of a few tracts, all of them

penned in a very moderate tone, although they did not lack that grain of salt which habitually seasoned his polemic writings. Besides the two pamphlets we have mentioned before, he published, in 1771, a few pages with this title, "The Consequence Proved."[1] In them he showed how legitimate were the consequences he had drawn from the principles Toplady had laid down in his summary of Zanchi's doctrine. But at the same time, Wesley declared he "had not leisure to consider the matter at large, and left the young man to be further corrected by one that is full his match, Mr. Thomas Olivers." The said Thomas Olivers, accordingly, did the thing, and did it in a masterly fashion.[2]

In the following year the repeated assaults of the brothers Hill at last decided Wesley to "draw the sword and throw away the scabbard," according to his own words. But he never allowed himself to overstep the bounds of propriety, although he strongly vindicated his character and principles against the attacks of these two gentlemen.[3] He confessed that Fletcher's writings had convinced him that he had dealt too leniently with "the reprobation preachers"; and since Richard Hill had declared that "any agreement with election-doubters was a covenant with death," he answered, "We are now forewarned and forearmed." In this pamphlet, and in another which appeared in 1773,[4] Wesley, often most successfully, confutes the charge of having altered his doctrine. This charge, which Richard Hill maintained by quoting many sentences from Wesley's books, was not without foundation, we admit, as to some minor

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. x. p. 370.

[2] *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Toplady.*

[3] *Some Remarks on Mr. Hill's Review of all the Doctrines taught by Mr. John Wesley.* (*Works*, vol. x. p. 374.)

[4] *Some Remarks on Mr. Hill's Farrago double distilled.* (*Works*, vol. x. p. 415.)

points, but altogether false in respect to the chief doctrines he professed.

We must mention another production from Wesley's pen which appeared in 1774, a tract on "Necessity,"[1] considered in a moral and philosophical light. He strongly contested in this writing the doctrine of the universal necessity of human actions, as professed by Hume, Hartley, and Edwards, and summed up his way of thinking in his Introduction: "I cannot believe the noblest creature in the visible world to be only a fine piece of clock-work."

John Fletcher published some more Checks, at short intervals, and in answer to the brothers Hill, and to Berridge, the pious curate of Everton, who had also volunteered to enter the lists on behalf of Calvinism, although he distinguished himself from his friends by always remaining dignified in his style of writing. It was only in 1776 that Fletcher wrote a reply to Toplady, who was, in spite of his want of moderation, the strongest champion of Calvinism. He first published, in answer to Toplady's *Vindication of the Decrees*,[2] a very clever pamphlet,[3] in which he shows, in a most forcible way, that the doctrine of the absolute and unconditional election of a few to life eternal involves, as a necessary consequence, the predestination of all the others to eternal death.

Toplady had also criticised the essay of Wesley on "Necessity," and expressed his own views very strongly about everything being foreordained.[4] John Fletcher followed him on that new ground, and was able to show

[1] *Thoughts upon Necessity.* (*Works*, vol. x. p. 457.)

[2] *More Work for Mr. John Wesley: or a Vindication of the Decrees and Providence of God.*

[3] *Answer to the Rev. Mr. Toplady's Vindication of the Decrees.*

[4] *The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted, in opposition to Mr. John Wesley's Tract on that Subject.* London, 1775.

himself equal to philosophical argument as well as to theological discussion. In his earnest wish to find a philosophical foundation for his theology, Toplady had ventured upon slippery ground. He insisted too much on the soul being dependent on the body, and he asked humorously what would happen if a human soul were shut up in the skull of a cat, or a cat's soul in a human skull: so that he seemed to conclude that there was an absolute connection between the shape or size of a skull and the moral worth of a man. He added: "We may, however, even on this occasion, address every one of our human brethren in the words of that great philosophic necessitarian, St. Paul, and ask, Who maketh thee to differ from the lowest of the brute creation? Thy Maker's free-will, not thine. And what pre-eminence hast thou, which thou didst not receive from Him? Not the least, nor the shadow of any."

Fletcher, in his answer, made stock of these words leaning to a materialist belief, and with that refined and effective irony which constituted one of his weapons as a controversialist, he replied:

"Admirable Divinity! So Mr. Toplady leaves the orthodox in doubt:—(1) Whether, when their souls, and the souls of cats, shall be let out of their respective brains or prisons, the souls of cats will not be equal to the souls of men. (2) Whether, supposing the soul of a cat had been put in the brain of St. Paul, or of a monthly reviewer, the soul of 'puss' would not have made as great an apostle as the soul of Saul of Tarsus; —as good a critic as the soul of the most sensible reviewer. And (3) whether, in case the 'human spirit' [of Isaiah] 'were shut up in the skull of a cat, puss would not, notwithstanding, move prone on all four, purr when stroked, spit when pinched, and birds and mice be her darling objects of pursuit' (p. 34). Is not

this a pretty large stride, for the first, towards the doctrine of the sameness of the souls of men with the souls of cats and frogs? Wretched Calvinism, new-fangled doctrines of grace, where are you leading your deluded admirers—your principal vindicators? Is it not enough that you have spoiled the fountain of living waters, by turning it into the muddy streams of Zeno's errors? Are ye also going to poison it by the absurdities of Pythagoras's philosophy? What a side-stroke is here inadvertently given to these capital doctrines! 'God breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul,'—a soul made 'in the image of God,' and not in the image of a cat:—'the spirit of the beast goeth downward to the earth; but the spirit of man goeth upward; it returns to God who gave it,' with an intention to judge and reward it according to its moral works.

"But I must do Mr. Toplady justice; he does not yet recommend this doctrine as absolutely certain. However, from his capital doctrine, that human souls have no free-will, no inward principle of self-determination; and from his avowed opinion, that the soul of one man, placed in the body of another man, 'would, similarly circumstanced, reason and act exactly like' the man in whose *mud-walls* it is lodged: it evidently follows: (1) That, had the human soul of Christ been placed in the body and circumstances of Nero, it would have been exactly as wicked and atrocious as the soul of that bloody monster was. And, (2) that if Nero's soul had been placed in Christ's body, and in His trying circumstances, it would have been exactly as virtuous and immaculate as that of the Redeemer. The consequence is undeniable. Thus the merit of *the man* Christ did not in the least spring from His righteous soul, but from His 'mud-walls,' and from the happiness which His soul had of being lodged in

a 'brain peculiarly modified.' Nor did the demerit of Nero flow from his free-agency and self-perversion; but only from his 'mud-walls,' and from the infelicity which his necessitated soul had of being lodged in an 'ILL-constructed vehicle,' and placed on that throne on which Titus soon after deserved to be called *the darling of mankind*. See, oh ye engrossers of orthodoxy, to what absurd lengths your aversion to the liberty of the will, and to evangelical worthiness, leads your unwary souls! And yet, if we believe Mr. Toplady, your scheme, which is big with these inevitable consequences, is Christian philosophy, and our doctrine of free-will is 'philosophy run mad!'"[1]

We have quoted this passage in full, because it shows the originality of Fletcher's talent for controversy, which assigned him a distinguished place in this debate with Calvinism. Robert Southey finds his style rather too diffuse, and adds: "The florid parts and the unction betray their French origin, but the reasoning is acute and clear, the spirit of his writings is beautiful, and he was a master of the subject in all its bearings." Southey adds: "If ever true Christian charity was manifested in polemical writing, it was by Fletcher, of Madeley. Even theological controversy never in the slightest degree irritated his heavenly temper."[2]

This controversy with Calvinistic doctrine in England was not a useless piece of theological fencing. It might seem that it had no other result than to confirm both sides in their particular views, and to make the interval between them deeper. But this would be a superficial and imperfect view of the case. When the dust raised by the conflict had been laid, it was found that Calvinistic predestinarianism had been mortally

[1] *Works* of J. Fletcher, vol. iv. pp. 26, 27.

[2] Southey's *Life of Wesley* (1858), vol. ii. chap. xxv. pp. 178, 179.

wounded, and that in its place had sprung up evangelical Arminianism, the same which had been condemned at the Synod of Dort. But whilst, in Holland, that theological system had drifted toward latitudinarianism, in England it was aiming at preserving in its integrity the doctrine of grace, as it had been transmitted by St. Paul to the Reformers; at the same time it rejected the teaching of predestination which the Reformers had derived from St. Augustine. Richard Watson says on that special point: "This controversy has been productive of important consequences. It showed to the pious and moderate Calvinists how well the richest views of evangelical truth could be united with Arminianism; and it affected, by its bold and fearless exhibition of the logical consequences of the doctrines of the decrees, much greater moderation in those who still admitted them, and gave birth to some softened modifications of Calvinism in the age that followed,—an effect which has remained to this day."[1]

[1] Richard Watson's *Life of Wesley*, chap. xi.

CHAPTER II

WESLEY'S ACTIVE OLD AGE

(1770–1780)

ALTHOUGH the controversy we have just described was certainly an important affair, still it was but a passing incident in Wesley's career, and it impaired neither his activity nor his serenity of mind. At the end of the decade we are on the point of summing up, he could say: "I do not remember to have felt lowness of spirits for one quarter of an hour since I was born."[1] "I feel and grieve; but, by the grace of God, I fret at nothing."[2] Attacks and insults had not been spared to him, as we have already seen, and shall see hereafter; difficulties were far from being all removed, and the future of his Church at times disquieted him. But his faith rested on God, and it raised him above discouragement.

In his old age he retained more strength than falls to the share of old men generally. In 1772, to please his friends, he took the advice of three Edinburgh doctors as to an infirmity that he contracted in falling from his horse. The doctors found it was a case of hydrocele, and ordered him not to ride any more. Consequently he did henceforth most of his travelling in a carriage, but he did not do less work for all that.

[1] *Methodist Magazine*, 1781, p. 185. [2] *Journal*, 28th June 1776.

Three years later, he was taken dangerously ill in Ireland, having caught cold one night whilst sleeping in a cottage, the roof of which was leaking and let the rain fall on his bed. He was for several days between life and death, through the intense fever that supervened. But the good care of his friends, and their prayers, brought him round, thanks no doubt to his strong constitution.

From that moment he registers in his *Journal*, at every one of his anniversaries, and with evident satisfaction, a sort of bulletin of his health. On his seventy-first birthday he was able to say: "I find just the same strength as I did thirty years ago." Two years after, he wrote: "I am seventy-three years old, and far abler to preach than I was at three and twenty." His voice was as strong as ever, his sight was better, his capacity for work was rather increased. "I have none of the infirmities of old age," he says, "and have lost several I had in my youth." In 1780 he wrote: "I can hardly think I am entered this day into the seventy-eighth year of my age. By the blessing of God, I am just the same as when I entered the twenty-eighth. This hath God wrought, chiefly by my constant exercise, my rising early, and preaching morning and evening."[1]

He still travelled on an average between four thousand and four thousand five hundred miles in a year, thus covering in six years a length of road equal to the world's circumference. When seventy years old he could yet accomplish, on an emergency, a journey of a hundred leagues in twenty-four hours without feeling tired.[2] To one who pitied him for being always on the roads, he said: "You do not at all understand my manner of life. Though I am always in haste, I am never in a hurry, because I never undertake any more work than I can go

[1] *Journal*, 28th June 1780. [2] *Ibid.*, 30th March 1774.

through with perfect calmness of spirit. It is true, I travel four or five thousand miles in a year. But I generally travel alone in my carriage, and consequently am as retired ten hours in a day as if I was in a wilderness. On other days I never spend less than three hours (frequently ten or twelve) in the day alone. So there are few persons in the kingdom who spend so many hours secluded from company. Yet I find time to visit the sick and the poor; and I must do it, if I believe the Bible, if I believe these are the marks whereby the Shepherd of Israel will know and judge His sheep at the great day."[1]

Occasionally we find the indefatigable missionary casting a momentary glance to the pleasures of a sedentary life, which he could have enjoyed just as much as anyone else. "I spent a useful and agreeable evening," he says in his *Journal*, "in the midst of friends who are among the excellent of the earth. I was disposed to say, 'It is good for me to abide here.' But no! the voice of God says, 'Go thou and preach the gospel.'" In his seventy-sixth year he writes: "I rested here [Newcastle]. Lovely place, and lovely company! But I believe there is another world; therefore I 'must arise and go hence.'" There is certainly something very touching in this venerable old man, who was not dispirited after the many disappointments of a long life, and who prosecuted his work with an almost juvenile enthusiasm.

Throughout this last period of his life Wesley was still as heartily received as ever. His success was not an ephemeral blaze: it had lasted thirty years, and was continually increasing. The grey-headed preacher knew how to retain the sympathy which he had won in his

[1] Letter of 10th December 1777, in *Methodist Magazine* for 1799, p. 564.

earlier days. A new generation had grown up around him, and the children learned to revere the man of whose zeal and sufferings they had heard their fathers talk. The news of his approach was enough to ensure a vast multitude of hearers, gathered from all quarters. The so-called "pit" at Gwennap was always filled when he preached in it. At Birstal and Leeds, as well as in the metropolis, he addressed multitudes as vast as those of former times. "I preached in Moorfields," he says in 1775, "to a larger congregation than usual. Strange that their curiosity should not be satisfied yet, after hearing the same thing near forty years.[1] Though his journeys were generally arranged beforehand, yet he preached a good deal as opportunity offered, in addition to his fixed appointments. He was frequently stopped on his journey and asked to preach: sometimes he found that a multitude of people had assembled of their own accord, and were waiting for him. When he had done, it was not always easy to escape from his audience: they refused to go away, and would have him to converse with them a little longer. "Whatever men may say," he writes, "as long as people show such an eagerness to hear, it is very clear that the time for open-air preaching is not past." With such audiences, it is no wonder that Wesley felt himself at home. "I was a little tired," he says in his *Journal*, "before I came to Portsmouth; but the congregation soon made me forget my weariness. Indeed, the people in general here are more noble than most in the south of England. They receive the Word of God 'with all readiness of mind.'"[2]

Wesley's preaching always retained those characteristics which had contributed so largely to its success: it penetrated the soul of his hearers, aroused them from their torpor, and inspired a profound sense of their

[1] *Journal*, 8th October 1775. [2] *Ibid.*, 11th October 1770.

spiritual misery. Though no longer accompanied by those external manifestations which were so common at first, the work of conversion proceeded as vigorously as ever, as is witnessed by the records of the journals.

At Gwennap, one who had denied the faith and turned his back upon his brethren was convinced of his sin under Wesley's preaching, and restored to the Church which he had disgraced by his fall.[1] At St. Agnes, after a sermon, a young female followed him into the house, "weeping bitterly and crying out, 'I must have Christ, I will have Christ. Give me Christ, or else I die!'" The old missionary pointed her to her Saviour; and while he was praying with her, she was "filled with joy unspeakable, and burst out, 'Oh, let me die! let me go to Him now! How can I bear to stay here any longer?'"[2]

The power of Wesley's faith was displayed as much in his prayers as in his preaching. On one occasion, while he was praying in public, his mind suddenly reverted to a backslider whose fall had created great scandal. He broke out abruptly, "Lord, is Saul also among the prophets? Is James Watson here? If he be, show Thy power." The poor man was there: he dropped down "like a stone, and began crying aloud for mercy."[3]

Apart from the work of conversion, there were moral and material transformations everywhere, wrought through the influence of Methodism, which Wesley could not but note in his progress through the country. The working classes had been raised to a higher level of existence; the colliers were completely transformed. As he journeyed through the north, and admired the cottages of Weardale, embosomed in verdure, and everything wearing the appearance of comfort and happiness,

[1] *Journal*, 4th September 1774. [2] *Ibid.*, 3rd September 1775.
[3] *Ibid.*, 5th June 1772.

he could not but reflect that "three out of four, perhaps nine out of ten, had been built since Methodism had made its appearance in the country."[1] Wesley describes the model society of colliers of that place in the following terms: "In two respects this society has always been peculiarly remarkable: the one, they have been the most liberal in providing everything needful for the preachers; the other, they have been particularly careful with regard to marriage. They have in general married with each other, and that not for the sake of money, but virtue. Hence . . . they assist each other in training up their children, and God has eminently blessed them therein. For, in most of their families, the greatest part of the children, above ten years old, are converted to God."[2]

In Cornwall, Wesley met with great encouragement. "Very few," he says, "of our old society are now left: the far greater part of them are in Abraham's bosom. But the new generation are of the same spirit; serious, earnest, devoted to God, and particularly remarkable for simplicity and Christian sincerity.

Of Shoreham, where his old friend Perronet was still living, he writes: "How is the last become first! No society in the country grows so fast as this, either in grace or number. The chief instrument of this glorious work is Miss Perronet, a burning and a shining light."[3] In the parish where another of his old friends had laboured he says: "What has God wrought since Mr. Grimshaw and I were seized near this place by a furious mob, and kept prisoners for some hours! The sons of him that headed that mob now gladly receive our saying."[4] The Nottingham society called forth the

[1] *Journal*, 2nd June 1772.
[2] *Ibid.*, 5th June 1772.
[3] *Ibid.*, 14th February 1776.
[4] *Ibid.*, 29th April 1776.

following observation: "There is something in the people of this town which I cannot but much approve of: although most of our society are of the lower class, chiefly employed in the stocking manufacture, yet there is generally an uncommon gentleness and sweetness in their temper, and something of elegance in their behaviour, which, when added to solid, vital religion, make them an ornament to their profession."[1]

Wesley visited Scotland several times during this period, and his preaching was appreciated both by rich and poor, though it did not meet with the marked success which attended it in other parts of Great Britain. The pulpits of the Established Church were open to him: the inhabitants of Perth and Arbroath conferred on him the freedom of their city. Wesley could not but congratulate himself on this friendliness: yet he complained of the cold and unimpressed manner in which they received the truths of the gospel. He was a problem to them, and they to him.

Ireland was a more sympathetic field, either on account of its religious situation and of the disposition of the inhabitants, or on account of Wesley's special gifts: and here his success was as great as ever. Not satisfied with visiting the principal centres of evangelisation, he penetrated to the farthest recesses of the mountainous districts, as he had always done, in order to proclaim the good tidings of salvation to the ignorant and neglected inhabitants. The scenes he witnessed were such as recalled the early years of his missionary life. Here, we find him preaching in a wood, under the shade of an old oak, while the rays of the setting sun play among the branches. There, he takes his stand in a public garden, while the crowd sit on the green sward on every side. Yonder, a tent is erected in the

[1] *Journal*, 18th June 1777.

courtyard of an old castle, and from its shelter he addresses a regiment of soldiers, who listen with enthusiasm to his energetic and almost martial utterances.

The Irish people were generally so well disposed toward their favourite preacher, that they would at any time leave their business in order to hear him. His arrival at Clare, one market day, was the signal for all to leave their merchandise, and they did not return to it till the preaching was finished.[1] While he was preaching at Blackpool, it began to rain; but both preacher and hearers were equally undaunted, and none stirred till the sermon was ended.[2] Once or twice the crowd, excited by the priests, indulged in a little hooting and stone-throwing; but these aggressions soon stopped, and order was completely restored.

In fact, the Irish work was in full prosperity: the number of members increased continually, and in many places large and commodious chapels were built through the liberality of the societies. While he rejoiced in these abundant proofs of prosperity, however, Wesley was alive to the dangers it involved. At Athlone, he says: "There is now no opposition, either from rich or poor. The consequence of this is, there is no zeal, while the people 'dwell at ease.' Oh, what state upon earth is exempt from danger? When persecution arises, how many are offended! When it does not arise, how many grow cold, and leave their 'first love'! Some perish by the storm, but far more by the calm. 'Lord, save, or we perish!'"[3]

In Great Britain the mob was everywhere conquered, and opponents durst not show their faces. If at any time a few reprobates meditated mischief, they soon had meted out to them a full and impartial measure of

[1] *Journal*, 10th April 1775. [2] *Ibid.*, 6th May 1775.
[3] *Ibid.*, 13th April 1771.

justice. His defenders sometimes offered him more protection than he required. One scapegrace, who interrupted the preaching with his jokes, found a warm reception, and retired from the scene covered with confusion. Another, a drunkard whose outrageous behaviour disturbed the congregation, was taken to task by his wife, who seized him by the collar, and, after administering salutary chastisement, marched him home amid the cheers of the people.[1] Often the multitude displayed a stronger sense of justice, and, instead of taking the law into their own hands, contented themselves with giving up the agents of mischief to the neighbouring magistrates. The magistrates themselves latterly acted like honourable men. One exception alone is recorded throughout this decade: a mayor sent two constables to prevent Wesley's preaching in the market-place; but they were ashamed of their errand, and preferred to obey their consciences rather than their master.

Although John Wesley could behave like a lion when circumstances required it, he knew also, in other cases, how to imitate the lamb's gentleness and patience. He could endure and forgive, two virtues which alone would qualify him to triumph over obstinate multitudes. At Halifax, a man, who was enraged with fury, pushed through the crowd until he reached the preacher, and then struck him violently on one side of the face. The blow was so fierce that the tears sprang out of Wesley's eyes; but, without the least hesitation, he presented the other cheek to the assailant, according to the precept of Christ. The man felt ashamed, and, suddenly cooling down, drew away, and took refuge in the background. From that moment he became a devoted friend of the Methodists, and at a later period he exposed his life in

[1] *Journal*, 12th June 1780.

trying to put out a fire in one of their chapels.[1] It was impossible that the preacher who could thus triumph over brutal strength should fail in his work of love.

The ascendency that Wesley thus gained over the minds of the people was owing to his personal and peculiar character. This is proved by the fact that at this very time other preachers suffered greatly from the violence of the multitude. William Darney was roughly handled, dragged through the mud, and trampled under foot by a mob stirred up by an intolerant clergyman. John Oliver was thrown into prison for preaching the gospel. Matthew Mayer suffered also at the hands of a crowd which had been excited by its leaders. Nelson, Mather, Taylor, Rodda, who ranked among Wesley's most efficient auxiliaries, endured similar treatment. But Wesley knew how to control the evil passions of the populace: the power of his word and the prestige of his long service vanquished prejudice; it stood rebuked in the presence of that serene figure, crowned with locks of snowy whiteness. This influence he wielded, not only where he was well known, but also in places that he visited for the first time. At Rednire he met with but a chilly reception. "As I rode through the town," he says, "the people stood staring on every side, as if we had been a company of monsters. I preached in the street, and they soon ran together, young and old, from every quarter. I reminded the elder of their having seen me thirty years before, when I preached in Wensley Church; and enforced once more, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' When I rode back through the town it wore a new face. The people were profoundly civil: they were bowing and

[1] Walker, *Methodism in Halifax*, pp. 122, 126. Quoted by Tyerman, vol. iii. p. 126.

courtesying on every side. Such a change in two hours I have seldom seen."[1]

This superiority of Wesley in dealing with the crowds was so well recognised among his preachers that they often summoned him to their help. As an instance, the people of Thame had so long resisted that the preachers at last refused to go there. But when Wesley appeared and spoke, their minds were soon quieted.[2]

The multitudes certainly would not have resisted so long had they not been encouraged to do so by men above them in social rank. We have seen how magistrates and clergymen led the opposition. In the period we have now reached, a general pacification seems to have been the order of the day; but it is a matter of astonishment that these new dispositions were not inspired into the lower classes by the upper ones; in fact, it was the contrary that took place. For a long time those who by social position and intelligence should have been qualified to inspire the masses with a proper regard for order, forgot all self-respect, and behaved most indecorously in the presence of plebeian gatherings, whose orderly and dignified bearing might well have put them to shame. Wesley complains strongly, in divers instances, of these "men whom English politeness calls gentlemen, but who behave worse than sailors or colliers." More than once these upper-class disturbers of the peace received well-merited rebukes from those who, though their inferiors in point of education, surpassed them in good sense and common decency. "Do you think I have need to be taught by a chaise-boy?" said one who had been making use of bad language to a groom, who reproved him on account of his improper behaviour in a meeting. "Really, sir,

[1] *Journal*, 14th June 1774. [2] *Ibid.*, 16th October 1778.

I think you do," said the lad, and the "gentleman" stood confounded.

Wesley knew how to reprimand these ill-behaved people when the occasion called for it. One such kept chuckling whilst he was preaching in Bingley Church. The preacher stopped, and, looking straight at him, said: "I heed your sneers no more than I heed the fluttering of a butterfly; but I know what good-breeding is as well as any gentleman in the land."[1]

The bishops did not act in the same hostile manner as they had done before. The Bishop of Man was a solitary exception in this respect. Methodism began to spread in the island in 1775, through the efforts of a brave soldier, John Crook by name, who, having been converted, became a local preacher, and left the army in order to go and proclaim the gospel message in the Isle of Man, without having been ordered there by anybody. The bishop thought it his duty to denounce Methodist "conventicles," and to declare that those who attended them would be deprived of the Sacraments in that diocese. In this circular the bishop spoke disrespectfully of "the crude and pragmatical and inconsistent, if not profane and blasphemous, *ex-tempore* effusions of these pretenders to the true religion."[2]

Under the direction of this dignitary of the Church, and of an influential clergyman, Dr. Moor, the natives of Man must have believed that every step taken against the Methodists was lawful, and they consequently persecuted them without mercy. It was then their preacher wrote to Wesley to ask for his advice. In his answer Wesley says:

"By all means stay in the island till the storm be

[1] Tyerman, *Life of Wesley*, vol. iii. p. 325.

[2] This curious circular, dated 16th July 1776, has been reprinted by Tyerman in his *Life of Wesley*, vol. iii. p. 229.

ended; in your patience possess your soul. Beware of despising your opponents! Beware of anger and resentment! Return not evil for evil, or railing for railing. I advise you to keep, with a few serious people, a day of fasting and prayer. God has the hearts of all men in His hands. Neither Dr. Moor, nor the bishop himself, is out of reach. Be fervent in prayer that God would arise and maintain His own cause. Assuredly, He will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear. Violent methods of redress are not to be used till all other methods fail. I know pretty well the mind of Lord Mansfield, and of one that is greater than he; but, if I appealed to them, it would bring much expense and inconvenience on Dr. Moor and others. I would not willingly do this; I love my neighbour as myself. Possibly, they may think better, and allow that liberty of conscience which belongs to every partaker of human nature, and more especially to every one of His Majesty's subjects in his British dominions."[1]

Three years later, in spite of such adverse beginnings, Man was a flourishing circuit, and counted 1050 members.

In England, however, the bishops were generally less bigoted than the one of Man, and treated Wesley with great respect. The Bishop of Londonderry, in Ireland, took pleasure in inviting him to his table. He dined once with the Bishop of London, the celebrated Dr. Lowth, at the house of their mutual friend, Ebenezer Blackwell. As they were going to sit round the table, the bishop declined the place of honour, saying: "Mr. Wesley, may I be found at your feet in another world." The Church of England had formerly closed her pulpits against him: now they were thrown open one by one, and the churches proved too small to hold the immense

[1] *Methodist Magazine*, 1808, p. 103.

congregations that assembled beneath their roofs to hear that voice which, for the last forty years, had been awaking chiefly the echoes of the roads and of the woods.

As Wesley grew older, he felt more and more the necessity of never losing sight of the supreme end of the evangelical ministry, which is the salvation of souls. In 1772 he wrote to his brother:

"Oh, what a thing it is to have *curam animarum*![1] You and I are called to this; to save souls from death; to watch over them as those that must give account! If our office implied no more than preaching a few times in a week, I could play with it: so might you. But how small a part of our duty (yours, as well as mine) is this! God says to you, as well as me, "Do all thou canst, be it more or less, to save the souls for whom My Son has died." Let this voice be ever sounding in our ears; then shall we give up our account with joy. *Eia age, rumpe moras!*[2] I am ashamed of my indolence and inactivity. . . . Your business, as well as mine, is to save souls. When we took priests' orders, we undertook to make it our *one business*. I think every day lost which is not (mainly at least) employed in this thing. *Sum totus in illo.*"[3]

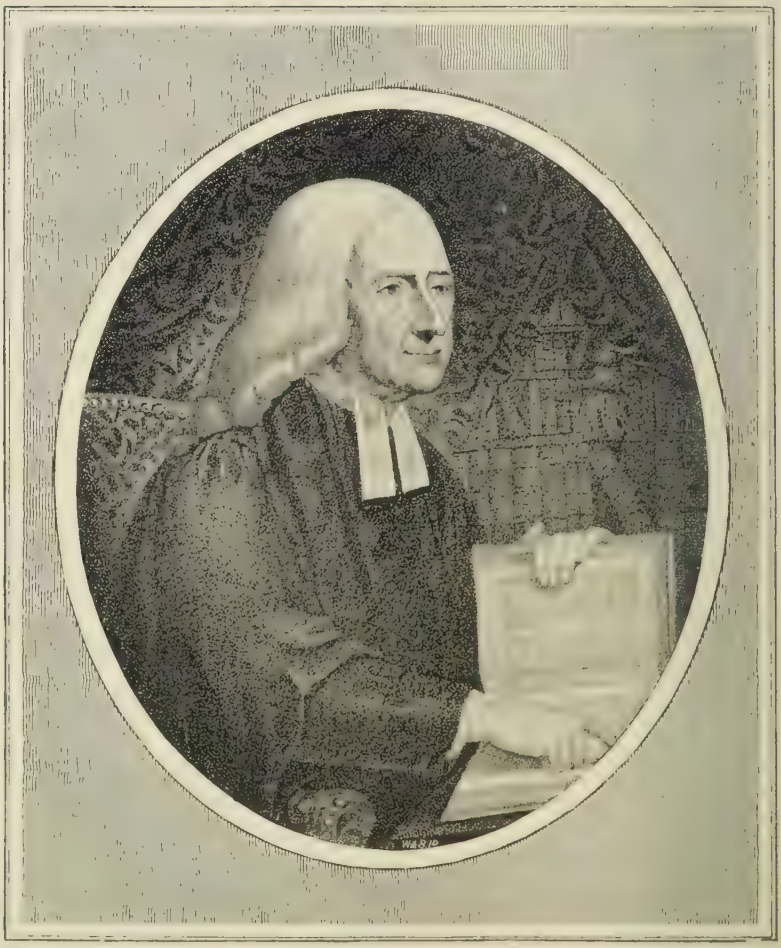
It was with the same object in view that, in the Conference of 1780, he said to the preachers:

"Observe, it is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that society, but to save as many souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance, and with all your

[1] The care of souls.

[2] "Come, bestir yourself, and lay aside delay." Virgil, *Æneid*, iv. 569.

[3] "I am entirely occupied with it." Wesley's *Works*, vol. xii. p. 129.



JOHN WESLEY.
(*Painted by H. Edridge.*)

power to build them up in that holiness without which no man can see the Lord."[1]

It was with such advice he tried to ward off formalism and the stationary disposition which otherwise might have paralysed Methodism. But the more he felt the necessity of aiming at the salvation of souls, the more he discovered the utmost importance of discipline and of pastoral work. Public meetings appeared to him comparatively useless, except they were followed by personal dealing with the hearers. As he advanced in years, he more and more recognised the usefulness of those religious conversations which have been called "class-meetings." In his letters to his helpers and colleagues, he frequently reminds them that they must make the attendance at these meetings obligatory. He writes to Benson as follows: "We must threaten no longer, but perform. In November last I told the London society: 'Our rule is, to meet a class once a week, not once in two or three. I now give you warning: I will give tickets to none in February, but those that have done this.' I have stood to my word. Go you and do likewise, wherever you visit the classes. Begin, if need be, at Newcastle, and go on at Sunderland. Promises to meet are now out of date. Those that have not met seven times in the quarter, exclude. Read their names in the society; and inform them all, you will the next quarter exclude all that have not met twelve times: that is, unless they were hindered by distance, sickness, or by some unavoidable business. And I pray, without fear or favour, remove the leaders, whether of classes or bands, who do not watch over the souls committed to their care 'as those that must give account.'"[2]

[1] Tyerman, vol. iii. p. 328. Minutes of the Conference, 1780.

[2] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xiii. p. 423, in a letter dated 22nd February 1776.

The extraordinary zeal which is shown, here and elsewhere, by Wesley respecting class-meetings simply shows how strong was his conviction that the spiritual development of his societies, and their extension and growth, depended mainly on the faithful observance of this means of grace

The societies were still agitated by serious questions of internal organisation, which were not settled for a long time to come. The administration remained also an undecided point. Wesley was influenced by his brother Charles, who, the older he grew the more conservative he became, and the more attached to the Church of England; and, under that influence, John Wesley advised the Methodists to maintain their connection with the Church and to go to her for the Sacraments. But this could not be a final solution of the problem. Another solution had to be found in order to satisfy the spiritual requirements of the members. Several incidents that occurred in the course of these years showed that the question would have to be solved in the direction of true freedom.

One of these was in connection with the building of the new City Road Chapel in London. The Methodists of the metropolis had several places of worship. Among others, they had occupied some Huguenot churches and two Episcopal chapels. But in 1776 their chief place of worship was still that old Foundery Chapel which Wesley had opened in 1739, and where he had his lodgings. It was when threatened with the loss of this building, which was only rented, that he undertook to build a sanctuary that would be their own. He made an appeal for funds to all the societies in the United Kingdom, and received most liberal answers. Consequently, he laid the foundation of the new chapel in the year 1777, in the City Road, which has since

become one of the largest arteries of London. On the 1st November 1778 the building was finished, and Wesley solemnly took possession of it.[1] For a long time this chapel was considered the finest religious edifice in London, always excepting the Anglican churches.

The Sunday service, in this new chapel, was at first conducted only by ministers who had been duly ordained,—such as Charles Wesley, Thomas Coke, John Richardson, and James Creighton. The Anglican form of service was used. But the preachers in the London circuit, John Pawson, Thomas Rankin, and others, did not easily submit to be excluded from the City Road pulpit, when they had hitherto preached in their turn either at the Foundery or in the other London chapels. The members, also, were not pleased to see thus put aside, because the bishop's hands had not been laid upon them, men who were nevertheless mighty preachers of the gospel. Charles Wesley, who was very anxious to assert his rights as a regular clergyman, and who was rather jealous of the popularity acquired by irregular ministers, wrote to his brother, who was travelling at the time, and complained of the preachers, whilst he vindicated his right to dispose of the City Road pulpit. John Wesley tried to re-establish harmony among them by recommending mutual forbearance and love: but he could easily foresee that this would be a permanent source of trouble, and that sooner or later things would have to be altered.

Another incident took place soon after which deserves

[1] He preached in the morning from the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple, and in the evening on Revelation xiv. 1. The chapel has been recently renovated and decorated at a cost of £10,000, subscribed by the English Methodists on the occasion of the centenary of Wesley's death.

to be related in order to show what was the state of things at that moment. The Conference of 1778 had appointed, for Bath, Alexander MacNab, a pious and able travelling preacher. A clergyman of the Irish Church, the Rev. Edward Smyth, having come at that time to reside in Bath on account of his wife's health, Wesley, who knew and esteemed him, asked him to preach in the chapel of that town every Sunday evening. But MacNab opposed this, and said that, having been stationed at Bath by the Conference, he did not intend to give up his pulpit to another. Wesley was then told by his brother, that, if he yielded in that case, it would be all over with his authority. He was so strongly influenced by Charles that they went together to Bath; and, after an inquest, John Wesley told MacNab that he could not any further consider him as one of his preachers, since he refused to submit to one of the fundamental rules of Methodism. This exercise of his authority he justified by asserting his right to direct the societies, even without consulting the Conference. This was a questionable principle, at a time when there were already one hundred and sixty travelling ministers, many of them men of great merit. One of them, Pawson, who was the first president of Conference after Wesley's death, declared that "the preachers in general thought that Mr. MacNab was cruelly used; and so they do to this day."[1]

This incident produced a great deal of agitation, especially in the societies of Bath and Bristol, whose membership became thoroughly disunited. But the trouble might have been still worse had not Wesley recognised and confessed his mistake, in a spirit of humility which honours him; and also re-instated MacNab, to the

[1] Tyerman, vol. iii. p. 311, from the MS. *Life of Dr. Whitehead*, by Pawson.

great displeasure of Charles, and the no smaller satisfaction of the preachers.

In spite of these internal difficulties, Methodism continued to spread, and in these ten years it gained 14,651 members, with 52 travelling preachers. In 1780 the total numbers of the membership were, for England and America, 52,334. The travelling preachers were 213, besides several hundred unpaid local preachers.

Among the new recruits to the body of preachers, we must name Francis Asbury, who became the father of American Methodism, and one of its first bishops; Joseph Benson, the commentator, who, expelled from Oxford for holding Methodist views, became one of the great lights of the Connexion; Samuel Bradburn, of whom Dr. Clarke said that he never heard his equal; James Rogers, the ardent evangelist; John Valton, a young Frenchman, who, after having served at the mass as a chorister, in his native country, became one of Wesley's choice companions;[1] Henry Moore, the first biographer of Wesley, who during a ministry of nearly seventy years was one of the most influential leaders of the society; and lastly, Dr. Coke, who, having sacrificed a good position in the Church in order to identify himself with Methodism, became one of its brightest ornaments, and the founder of its great missionary enterprise.

Such accessions formed a guarantee for the future of the work. That future was, indeed, already safe. The care of Methodism was now being devolved on men whose piety and intelligence ensured its continuance after Wesley's death. On this point he was himself fully satisfied, as is shown by the hopeful strain in which he thus wrote to a friend:—

"The remark of Luther, 'that a revival of religion

[1] It is said that, in England, one of his sermons was the means of bringing to God no less than a hundred people.

seldom continues above thirty years,' has been verified many times in several countries. But it will not always hold. The present revival of religion in England has already continued fifty years. And, blessed be God, it is at least as likely to continue as it was twenty or thirty years ago. Indeed, it is far more likely; as it not only spreads wider, but sinks deeper, than ever; more and more persons being able to testify that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. We have, therefore, reason to hope that this revival of religion will continue, and continually increase, till the time when all Israel shall be saved, and the fulness of the Gentiles shall come." [1]

Wesley was not only the head of Methodism, but a philanthropist and a Christian patriot; and such he remained to his death. The English Government was then at war with its American colonies, which had secured France as an ally. That prolonged struggle caused a great deal of suffering in England. Wesley's frugal life and simple tastes enabled him to devote a considerable part of his resources to works of benevolence. On one occasion, when in Ireland, his carriage stuck fast in a bog: while the men were endeavouring to extricate it, a poor man passed by, and Wesley, observing his profound dejection, enquired the cause. The man told him that he was in danger of being turned out of house and home, his landlord having threatened to eject him for arrears amounting to twenty shillings. Wesley put a sovereign in his hand, and the poor man fell on his knees, crying out, "Now I shall have a house to shelter me," and began to pray for his benefactor with all his might. "I believe," said Wesley, "God answered his prayer by helping us out of the bog."

[1] From a letter to Miss Ritchie, dated 12th February 1779 (*Works*, vol. xiii. p. 61).

In the course of his pastoral visits he was often the eye-witness of great misery. "I began visiting," he says in 1777, "those of our society who lived in Bethnal Green Hamlet. Many of them I found in such poverty as few can conceive without seeing it. Oh, why do not all the rich that fear God constantly visit the poor? Can they spend part of their spare time better? Certainly not. . . . Such another scene I saw the next day in visiting another part of the society. I have not found any such distress, no, not in the prison of Newgate. One poor man was just creeping out of his sick bed to his ragged wife and three little children, who were more than half-naked, and the very picture of famine; when one, bringing in a loaf of bread, they all ran, seized upon it, and tore it in pieces in an instant. Who would not rejoice that there is another world?"[1]

The problems of poverty and of the high price of food were also studied by him in a pamphlet which was reprinted in several newspapers. He did a great deal in the way of establishing benevolent institutions. Already, in 1772, a society for visiting the poor was created in London under his patronage, and took the title of "The Christian Community." This society is still in existence.

He strongly recommended his preachers to visit prisoners. Silas Told, the schoolmaster of the Foundery, devoted himself in a truly admirable manner to this work of love, and, for more than thirty years, assiduously visited the prisons. The work he accomplished there he has related in his edifying autobiography, and it places him worthily among those Christian benefactors who have laboured to bring some comfort to those who are in bonds.

Wesley always was a zealous visitor of the prisons, and more than once had the happiness of leading con-

[1] *Journal*, 15th January 1777.

demned criminals to that Saviour who pardoned the penitent malefactor. In 1767 he had had a somewhat sharp controversy with Dr. Dodd, a clergyman of some renown, and a clever writer, who, like many others, wished to break a lance with the founder of Methodism. Ten years rolled away, and Wesley had almost lost sight of his old antagonist, when he received a message begging him to come immediately. The brilliant preacher of former days was in prison on a charge of forgery. He was convicted of having counterfeited the handwriting of Lord Chesterfield, a former pupil of his, for the purpose of obtaining money; and, according to the stringent legislation of those days, the penalty was death. Smitten with remorse, and desirous of making his peace with God, the unfortunate man sought the advice of Wesley, thus doing sincere homage to the piety of the man whom he had once so violently assailed. In the interviews that Wesley had with him, he showed all the signs of genuine repentance, and Wesley pointed him to "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." Two days before his execution he paid him another visit, and was present while his wife took her leave of him. It was a touching scene. "Oh, sir," said he, in reply to the encouragements that Wesley offered him, "it is not for such a sinner as me to expect any joy in this world. The utmost I can desire is peace; and, through the mercy of God, that I have." "On Friday morning," continues Wesley, "all the prisoners were gathered together when he came down into the court. He seemed entirely composed. But when he observed most of them lifting up their hands, praying for him, blessing him, and weeping aloud, he was melted down, burst into tears too, and prayed God to bless them all. When he came out of the gate, an innumerable multitude were waiting, many of whom seemed ready to insult

him. But the moment they saw him their hearts were changed, and they began to bless him and pray for him too. . . . One of his fellow-prisoners seemed to be in utter despair. Dr. Dodd, forgetting himself, laboured to comfort him, and strongly applied the promises. After some time spent in prayer, he pulled his cap over his eyes, and, sinking down, seemed to die in a moment. I make no doubt but in that moment the angels were ready to carry him into Abraham's bosom."[1]

Wesley was among the first who felt a deep concern in the painful question of slavery and of the slave-trade, and he put forth his whole energy in attacking those iniquities. "In returning," he writes in his *Journal*, "I read a very different book, published by an honest Quaker, on that execrable sum of all villanies, commonly called the Slave-Trade. I read of nothing like it in the heathen world, whether ancient or modern: and it infinitely exceeds, in every instance of barbarity, whatever Christian slaves suffer in Mahommetan countries."[2]

Two years later Wesley published his *Thoughts upon Slavery*,[3] in which writing he discussed the whole question in its various bearings, and fearlessly denounced the unrighteous enslaving of man by his fellow-man. This eloquent essay, in which the noble old man had thrown all his strength of mind and heart, ended with the following prayer:—

"O Thou God of love, Thou who art loving to every

[1] *Works*, vol. xi. p. 454.

[2] The book here alluded to by Wesley is probably that of Anthony Benezet, a French Quaker, who, after being brought up in England, settled in Philadelphia. In 1762 he wrote a book which drew the public thought in England to the question of slavery. Afterwards he reprinted, in America, Wesley's pamphlet on the same subject, and sent him a kind letter in which he used the pronoun *thou*, as the Quakers are wont to do. That letter is to be found in the *Arminian Magazine*, 10th volume, p. 44.

[3] *Works*, vol. xi. p. 59.

man, and whose mercy is over all Thy works; Thou who art the Father of the spirits of all flesh, and who art rich in mercy unto all; Thou who hast made of one blood all the nations upon earth: have compassion upon these outcasts of men, who are trodden down as dung upon the earth! Arise, and help these that have no helper, whose blood is spilt upon the ground like water! Are not these also the work of Thine own hands, the purchase of Thy Son's blood? Stir them up to cry unto Thee in the land of their captivity; and let their complaint come up before Thee; let it enter into Thy ears! Make even those that lead them away captive to pity them, and turn their captivity as the rivers in the south. Oh, burst Thou all their chains in sunder; more especially the chains of their sins! Thou Saviour of all, make them free, that they may be free indeed!

> The servile progeny of Ham
> Seize as the purchase of Thy blood!
> Let all the heathens know Thy name:
> From idols to the living God
> The dark Americans convert,
> And shine in every pagan heart!"

At that time, when Wesley denounced in his country the infamous crimes of slavery, the conscience of the nation had not yet been awakened to that great evil, and Christians themselves did not reflect upon the painful theme. Whitefield had died, four years before, leaving numerous slaves on his lands in Georgia, which he bequeathed by his will to Lady Huntingdon, and nobody found fault with that. Wesley was really one of the very first who raised their voice to protest, as Christians; and that was sixty years before the cause of emancipation triumphed.[1]

[1] It was in the same year Wesley read the book of A. Benezet that Granville Sharpe began his efforts, which gave rise, fifteen years later,

We must confess he was not so clear-sighted in purely political questions when he felt called to make his opinion known to the public. His patriotic feelings led him to take his stand against the American colonies, which resisted the taxes laid upon them by the mother-country. He wrote several pamphlets on the subject, the first of which was, *A Calm Address to our American Colonies*, 1775. It had a very great success in England, and 40,000 copies were sold in three weeks. The English Government, too happy to meet with so distinguished an advocate, when there were many who took sides against it, caused the tract to be distributed at the doors of the churches in London. One of the highest officers of State waited upon Wesley, asking whether there was any favour he wished to obtain from the Government. He answered that "he looked for no favours, and only desired the continuance of civil and religious privileges." However, on his visitor insisting, he consented to receive £50 for the poor. Dr. Clarke says that, on relating the incident, Wesley "expresses himself as sorry that he had not requested to be made a royal missionary, and to have the privilege of preaching in every church."[1]

But that political excursion, whilst it procured for him the smiles of the Court, brought upon his head more hatred and insults than even the Calvinistic controversy had done. All sorts of infamous imputations and slanders were hurled at him. But to those who pretended that he flattered the ruling powers, he answered in another pamphlet: "I have no private views in doing this. I attend no great man's table.

to the Society for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade, a society which numbered among its members not only Sharpe, but also Clarkson and Wilberforce.

[1] Everett, *Life of Dr. Adam Clarke.*

I have nothing to ask, either of the king, or any of his ministers. You may easily believe this; for if I had sought wealth or preferment half a century ago, I should hardly think it worth while to seek it now, when I have one foot in the grave. But I have a view to contribute all that in me lies to the public welfare and tranquillity."[1]

About the same time the English Government thought proper to improve the condition of Roman Catholics by abrogating King William's laws. Wesley found fault with this new departure, and expressed his opinion in the public papers. A controversy then arose between him and a certain Irish priest, Rev. O'Leary, a man not without talent. Wesley did not wish to see the civil and religious freedom of Roman Catholics diminished; but, in common with all pious Englishmen of that time, he did not desire to see it increased.

If Wesley's political views, both on the American question and on that relating to Roman Catholics, were not exactly liberal, it came from his excess of loyalty. He wished his societies and preachers to remain faithful to the king, and he often reminded them of that duty. This sentiment was such as to blind him to the mistakes committed by the Government, and to lead him to defend what has turned out to be indefensible. But he was never influenced in these matters by any interested or low motives, and those who have suspected him have not gained any credit or esteem themselves by so doing.

In the course of these ten years Wesley was roughly handled by various writers. From the Calvinistic con-

[1] *A Calm Address to the Inhabitants of England*, 1777. Wesley's other writings on that question were: *Some Observations on Liberty*, 1776; *A Seasonable Address to the Inhabitants of Great Britain*, 1776; *A Compassionate Address to the Inhabitants of Ireland*, 1778.

troversy had arisen a number of pamphleteers who made it a point to attack him persistently, and who improved every opportunity to try and damage his character and conduct by the most violent libels. It would be difficult to believe what excesses in argument and style these writers dared to commit, whilst they seldom dared to sign their productions. It was when the mobs had been vanquished by the patient love of the worthy old man, and had ceased throwing mud at him, that the pamphleteers took up the part and acted it with more cruelty than ever the mob had done. It was in the year 1778 that the anonymous attacks most abounded and were most violent.

Wesley showed his greatness of mind by the quiet way in which he saw these assaults directed against him. When his brother Charles encouraged him to rebut some of the false charges brought against him, he answered, "Brother, when I devoted to God my ease, my time, my life, did I except my reputation? No."[1]

Besides the works published by Wesley, and noticed in this chapter and in the preceding one, we must mention an edition of his Works in thirty-two volumes, which was printed in Bristol between 1771 and 1774, and also the *Arminian Magazine*.

This last was a monthly periodical which began to appear in 1778, and remained under the direction of Wesley till his death. He published in its pages about sixty new sermons, and numerous articles on a great variety of subjects. In the early years of its existence the magazine was principally devoted, as its name implied, to the defence of evangelical Arminianism against the bold champions of radical Calvinism. But soon the scope of the periodical was enlarged, and a smaller space given to polemics,

[1] Jackson, *Life of Charles Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 283.

which was a clear gain for edification. The collection of the *Arminian Magazine*, and of the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, which was its title after a time, constitutes the oldest religious review now in existence, and it is an invaluable treasure, especially in the line of religious biography.

CHAPTER III

THE LAST YEARS OF ACTIVITY

(1780–1790)

Wesley had often prayed, "Lord, let me not live to be useless!" "Leisure and I," he was accustomed to say, "have taken leave of each other. If my health will permit, I propose to be busy as long as I live." God granted him the desire of his heart, and, thanks to an excellent constitution, he was enabled to pursue his apostolic labours to the close of a protracted life.

At eighty-one he writes: "I am as strong at eighty-one as I was at twenty-one; but abundantly more healthy, being a stranger to the headache, toothache, and other bodily disorders which attended me in my youth. We can only say, 'The Lord reigneth!' While we live, let us live to Him." A year later occurs in his *Journal* the following astonishing note: "By the good providence of God I finished the eighty-second year of my age. Is anything too hard for God? It is now eleven years since I have felt any such thing as weariness: many times I speak till my voice fails, and I can speak no longer; frequently I walk till my strength fails, and I can walk no farther; yet even then I feel no sensation of weariness, but am perfectly easy from head to foot. I dare not impute this to natural causes: it is the will of God."[1]

[1] *Journal*, 28th July 1785.

Wesley's mode of life was eminently favourable to bodily vigour. He rose regularly at four in the morning, and preached as regularly at five. He retired early to rest, and slept soundly, not having lost a night's rest for fifty years. Much was due, as he acknowledged, to the regularity of his habits, and still more to the serenity of spirit which shielded him from oppressive cares, by enabling him to see in all things the hand of God.

He had, nevertheless, to pass twice through illness in 1783, and it caused serious anxiety among his friends. In the month of March he was stopped in the midst of his travels by a violent fever, which endangered his life. He was hardly recovered when he sailed for Ireland. But, a few months later, he had to go through a still more serious crisis at Bristol, and he thought the end was near. For eighteen days he hung between life and death. In the following lines he describes to his faithful friend and fellow-traveller, Joseph Bradford, the reflections that he made at the time: "I have been wandering up and down between fifty and sixty years, endeavouring, in my poor way, to do a little good to my fellow-creatures; and now, it is probable that there are but a few steps between me and death, and what have I to trust to for salvation? I can see nothing which I have done and suffered that will bear looking at. I have no other plea than this—

> I the chief of sinners am,
> But Jesus died for me."[1]

But these fits of sickness were only warnings, and he was yet spared to devote eight years more to his important work. He resumed the task which had momentarily been laid aside, and sought to redeem time more earnestly than ever.

[1] Moore's *Life of Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 389.

While his physical powers seemed exempt from the decrepitude which is the ordinary lot of old age, his intellect retained in equal measure its marvellous lucidity. "His associates," says one of his biographers, "could not perceive in him any signs of intellectual decay, nor can the critic detect any in his writings. Without the usual return of the mental weakness of childhood, there is apparent some return of its pure and simple freshness and vivacity. Increased sunshine seems to illuminate his daily life; he records beautiful impressions of nature and books more frequently: he compares and criticises Ariosto and Tasso; he indulges occasionally in dramatic reading and criticism; he discusses with zest the question of Ossian's poetry, then rife in literary circles; he notes, in brief but picturesque passages, the scenery of his out-door preaching, and visits oftener, and describes more fully than ever, the gardens of the nobility. 'Elegant' buildings [a phrase often applied by him to new Methodist chapels], and fine music and grand old ruins, excite his admiration. . . . He is no Puritan iconoclast. He is refreshed by the bursting forth of the spring in the north, and by the return of the singing birds. 'How gladly would I repose awhile here!' he writes of a locality with a pleasant garden and shady walk around the neighbouring meadows, 'but repose is not for me in this world.'"[1]

"So fine an old man," says Alexander Knox. "I never saw. The happiness of his mind beamed forth in his countenance; every look showed how fully he enjoyed 'the gay remembrance of a life well spent!' Wherever he went he diffused a portion of his own felicity. While the grave and serious were charmed with his wisdom, his sportive sallies of innocent mirth delighted even the young and thoughtless: and both saw

[1] Stevens, *History of Methodism*, vol. ii. p. 197.

in his uninterrupted cheerfulness the excellence of true religion. In him even old age appeared delightful, like an evening without a cloud, and it was impossible to observe him without wishing fervently, 'May my latter end be like his!'"[1]

It was impossible to gaze upon the countenance of this aged ambassador of Christ without feelings of respect, and even of reverence. He was short in stature, and his physiognomy indicated profound seriousness, bordering indeed on austerity. His bright, piercing eyes lit up a finely chiseled and expressive face with a peculiar glow; his large and lofty forehead indicated the man of intellect, while his firmly knit lips bespoke the man of energy and decision. The whole countenance, set off by long flowing locks of snow-white hair reaching to the shoulders, had a singularly winning effect on all beholders. Internal peace irradiated his features with a sweet, benevolent smile. As this venerable man walked in the streets of the metropolis, with the quick step and earnest bearing which never forsook him, and as if still intent on buying up every moment of time, the passers-by stopped spontaneously and offered salutations of profound respect; and in doing so they did homage to the moral grandeur of his well-spent life.

But it was in the pulpit more especially that this venerable old man produced the deepest impression; it was there that the majesty of his character was the most strikingly displayed. A portrait has come down to us, full of expression, sketched from one of the galleries in the Foundery Chapel by a talented artist, who was a member of the congregation.[2] The preacher

[1] *Remarks on the Life and Character of John Wesley*, inserted at the end of *The Life of Wesley*, by Robert Southey.

[2] This portrait will be found at the beginning of the remarkable book by Isaac Taylor, *Wesley and Methodism.*

is there pictured to the life, as occupying the sacred desk, and in the very attitude of preaching. The head is stretched forward, and the countenance illuminated with the glow of an almost mystic devotion: the prevailing expression is that of an unspeakable tenderness, which is evidently finding vent in fervid appeals, delivered with a voice less melodious perhaps than of old, but still capable of giving forth powerful and pathetic tones. The flight of years has lined his countenance; but this has lost neither the fire of youth nor the force of maturity, and the mingled expression answers well to the complex character of his mind. One might call it a combination of Moses and St. John. In fact, in his preaching he did combine these two almost contradictory types, the severity of the Jewish lawgiver and the mildness of the beloved disciple. His eloquence, which for more than half a century had held such unbounded sway over his audiences, was Christian eloquence of the most genuine kind, such as is replenished not from the turbid streams of a frivolous rhetoric, but at the living fountains of eternal truth.

In order to form a just idea of the influence wielded by Wesley over the English nation, we must follow him on his missionary tours. All the counties of England heard from this octogenarian the word of eternal life. He still accomplished every year a journey through England which lasted from four to seven months, and when he came back to London he would frequently go for several days, or even weeks, into some of the southern counties. It must be remembered that, through these long months, the intrepid old man, whose health was delicate rather than robust, was exposed to the inclemency of the seasons, and to all sorts of privations; eating generally with poor people, and sleeping in all kinds of beds: without complaining of fatigue, he went

on preaching twice a day, and attending to the most minute details of that organisation of which he was the soul. Who could refrain from admiring so great, and almost unique, an activity?

Many, indeed, are the instances supplied by Wesley's *Journal* of that period, which confirm the fact of his very active ministry.

On the 29th July 1781 he writes: "I preached at Crowle and at Epworth. I have now preached thrice a day for seven days following; but it is just the same as if it had been but once."[1] In June 1786, when he was eighty-three, he preached twice on a Sunday at Hull, in "one of the largest parish churches in England," where immense crowds attended. On the following day he travelled in a carriage seventy-six miles, in order to preach at Malton, at Pocklington, at Swinfleet; after which he writes: "Sufficient for this day was the labour thereof; but still I was no more tired than when I rose in the morning."[2]

In the course of this same year, having undertaken to write a biography of John Fletcher, the friend he had recently lost, he says: "To this I dedicated all the time I could spare, till November, from five in the morning till eight at night. These are my studying hours; I cannot write longer in a day without hurting my eyes."[3]

Wherever he went he was greeted with tokens of the most profound respect, and his utterances still excited the enthusiasm of the people. It appeared as if they strove to efface the memory of former trials by their manifestations of sympathy and respect. And now they could hear him, not only in chapels, or in private houses, or in the open air, but also very often in the parish churches.

[1] *Journal*, 29th July 1781. [2] *Ibid.*, 19th June 1786.
[3] *Ibid.*, 26th September 1786.

At Grimsby he preached in the churchyard, where the entire population assembled to hear him.[1] At Witney he took advantage of the fears excited by a terrible storm, and preached to an immense multitude on the great scenes of death and judgment, after which thirty-four persons came to him and sought admission into the society.[2] At Epworth he preached to a larger congregation than ever before: it was with deep emotion that he visited the churchyard, where he had preached on his father's tombstone, and, while musing on the gaps which death had made in the ranks of his old companions in his native place, he exclaimed: "It is very true that 'one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh up,' the earth loses its inhabitants as a tree sheds its leaves." At Kingswood he was delighted to be among the colliers who had been civilised by his means, and to preach to them under the shade of the double row of trees which he had planted with his own hands forty years before; and his word seemed to gain energy from the reminiscences of the past. At Burslem he had announced that he would preach at five in the morning; but the impatience of the people was so great that they assembled long before the time appointed, and, shortly after four, a band of musicians came to escort him to the chapel to the sound of music and singing of hymns.[3] At Bingley one of his assistants had to preach to one part of the congregation while he preached to another, as his voice could not reach them all.[4] At Newark the mayor and the aldermen requested that he would do them the honour to preach before them.[5] At Plymouth he had to be borne above the heads of the crowd to the pulpit, "and after

[1] *Journal*, 2nd July 1781. [2] *Ibid.*, 16th July 1783.
[3] *Ibid.*, 30th March 1787. [4] *Ibid.*, 27th April 1788.
[5] *Ibid.*, 11th February 1787.

a solemn parting we took coach," he says, "at six, leaving such a flame behind us as was never kindled before. God grant it may never be put out!"[1] Of Castle-Carey he said: "How are the times changed! The first of our preachers that came hither, the zealous mob threw into the horsepond: now high and low earnestly listen to the word that is able to save their souls."[2] At Gloucester also, he writes: "The scandal of the Cross (such is the will of God) is ceased. High and low, rich and poor, flock together, and seem to devour the word. I preached on building upon a rock, and spoke with all plainness. Many, I believe, were cut to the heart; for it was a day of the Lord's power."[3]

Such expressions constantly fell from Wesley's pen, and every page of his journals proves that his preaching produced the same effect in his old age as when he was yet in his prime. It still smote upon the consciences, and frequently, as at Coleford, "the flame broke out. Many cried aloud, many sunk to the ground, many trembled exceedingly; but all seemed to be quite athirst for God, and penetrated by the presence of His power."[4] The sobs of penitents and the joyous exclamations of the saved were now the only interruptions to Wesley's preaching, and his open-air services were attended by no disorder, save what might be occasioned by the extreme enthusiasm of the people. This happened at Oxford, the university town so intimately connected with Wesley's life: the eagerness of those who wanted to listen to him made the meeting so noisy "that they hindered one another from hearing.[5]

Wesley's progress through Cornwall was a genuine ovation: in every town the whole population turned

[1] *Journal*, 4th March 1787. [2] *Ibid.*, 27th September 1787.
[3] *Ibid.*, 18th March 1788. [4] *Ibid.*, 8th September 1784.
[5] *Ibid.*, 29th October 1789.

out to hear him. At Truro, notwithstanding an extraordinary storm, a large congregation assembled, and all were so profoundly affected under his sermon as to appear fully determined to save their souls.[1] At Redruth thousands upon thousands flocked together from all parts in order to hear him preach, and not only filled the streets but all the windows, while some climbed up to the roofs of the houses, that they might see him and hear him.[2] At Falmouth, where forty years before he had narrowly escaped death at the hands of the mob, he made his entry into the town in the midst of an enormous concourse of people. "High and low lined the street, from one end of the town to the other, out of stark love and kindness, gaping and staring as if the king were going by."[3]

At Port-Isaac he preached to almost all the inhabitants of the place, and writes: "How changed since the time when he that invited me durst not take me in, for fear his house should be pulled down."[4] Throughout the country the chapels were too small to contain the people, and he generally had to preach in the public places, formerly the arena of his conflicts with the mob.

Similar scenes took place in Ireland, where he everywhere received an enthusiastic welcome. As he was approaching Cork, he was met by a cortege of thirty men on horseback, who came to conduct him into the city.[5] On a subsequent visit the mayor invited him to his own house, and showed him "the lions" of the city: a Catholic priest, called Father O'Leary, who had once waged war with him in the newspapers, dined with him, and manifested the greatest respect.[6] At Aughalan he found a large congregation seated on the slope of a hillock,

[1] *Journal*, 28th August 1781.
[2] *Ibid.*, 9th September 1787.
[3] *Ibid.*, 18th August 1789.
[4] *Ibid.*, 27th August 1789.
[5] *Ibid.*, 5th May 1785.
[6] *Ibid.*, 12th May 1787.

and soon sobs were heard on every side, at times drowning his voice.[1] The same effects were produced at Enniskillen, "formerly a den of lions," but where "the lions had become lambs"; and numerous conversions rewarded his labours there.[2] Even among the mountains he was astonished to see multitudes of people flock to his preaching. "One would wonder whence all the people came," he says; "they seemed to spring out of the earth."[3] Nowhere in Ireland, where there was so much of religious and political dissensions, did he meet with any opposition: all classes of society received him warmly. The work was prospering, and had progressed very rapidly during the last few years. The Dublin society was still one of the most flourishing in the three kingdoms, and in 1787 Wesley spoke of it as second in importance to none but that of the metropolis itself.

Thus was John Wesley spending the remaining strength of his green old age, in that work of evangelisation which had engaged all the powers of his whole life.

This well-earned popularity Wesley availed himself of solely to promote the honour of his Master. What a lesson for the multitudes, who came to greet him along his journeys, was the very sight of the venerable old man thus spending in God's service years that for others would have been a time of well-deserved rest, and displaying more activity than many men in possession of all their vigour!

"Fortunate would the artist have been who could have followed him, and preserved for his numerous people representations of the touching or grand scenes of these, his last years,—his preaching in the Gwennap amphitheatre to audiences such as Whitefield probably never saw; in Redruth Street, with the wandering hosts

[1] *Journal*, 29th May 1787. [2] *Ibid.*, 30th May 1787. [3] *Ibid.*

hanging on the windows and roofs, as well as crowding the neighbouring streets; his address in Newgate to forty-seven men who were under sentence of death, 'the clink of whose chains was very awful,' but most of whom sobbed with broken hearts, while he proclaimed that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth; or the night-scene near Newcastle-under-Lyne, when the silver locks of the untiring apostle gleamed in the clear moonlight as he stood, 'in the piercing cold,' preaching under the village trees to a multitude four times as large as could have got into the chapel."[1]

During the last years of his pilgrimage the mighty evangelist did not forsake his former mode of activity: he still placed in the first rank of his aims and ends the conversion of the common people. But the more he aimed at achieving that grand purpose, the more he felt urged to try and perfect the instruments which he had hitherto employed in that work. Soon the societies and preachers would be left to themselves, deprived of the man whose firm hand and lofty mind had guided them so long. It would be a crisis, and that crisis must be not only foreseen, but also prepared for. In our next chapter we shall relate what measures Wesley took in view of the future, and also to ensure the prosperity of the American missions which were growing in a wonderful manner.

He could not hope to make arrangements of that kind without meeting here and there with difficulties and with various personal feelings. Some considered him as too radical; others, as too conservative. Whilst one party accused him of impeding the progress and march of the societies by his superstitious attachment to the Church of England, the others charged him with the intention of acting so as to bring about an irreparable

[1] Stevens, *History of Methodism*, vol. ii. p. 244.

schism. Whilst his brother Charles, whose affection for him had not diminished, condemned him for what he considered rash steps, most of the preachers complained that he was too timid. But Wesley let them all have their say, and went on guiding the Methodist movement in what appeared to him the best direction.

Such an authority as he wielded, almost absolute as it was, though tempered with kindness and gentleness, was explained and justified by the superior gifts which nobody could avoid recognising in the man chosen and qualified by God for that mighty work. Besides, Methodist societies for a long time could not have prospered, or even have remained united, if they had not obeyed the strong guiding hand of one leader.

But the time had come when the personal government of Wesley must give place to a constitutional régime. Around him had grown up those helpers whom he loved to call his "sons,"—several of whom were remarkable men,—and it was proper they should be associated with him more closely in the guidance of the general work. Nevertheless, Wesley did not think it advisable to relinquish his authority until death should intervene. This was the cause of some uneasiness and of some difficulties, which, however, did not deeply affect the state of things, and at all events did not alter in the least the deep respect which the societies always showed to their venerable founder.

The mighty activity of Wesley's mind is clearly manifested in the care with which he, until the end, attended to the smallest details in the progress of these societies. Owing to his extensive correspondence and to his frequent visits, he was able to follow all their movements and to make himself acquainted with all the circumstances in their affairs. The yearly Conferences also supplied him with abundant information, whilst

they maintained unity of purpose among the preachers. They had become too numerous for them all to attend Conference every year, and it was Wesley who decided which of them should go.[1] The subjects discussed there were all questions relating to the welfare of the societies, and to the efficiency of itinerant ministers. Frequently they had to deal with the problems of their attitude towards the Established Church, and of the administration of the Sacraments: and at times the debates on these points were very lively. They had also to examine cases in which doctrine and discipline were involved. As to discipline, it must be acknowledged that the Conferences went down into the very minutiæ of regulations. For instance, we find the following among the instructions given to preachers in 1789: "The Rules must be read once every quarter to the members of societies; nobody to be admitted at a love-feast without a ticket; the money contributed at the love-feast must be sacred to the poor; preachers were not to take supper at friends, and not to come home later than nine o'clock; their children were to be dressed in a simple manner; no book was to be published without Wesley's consent."

In the course of each Conference, Wesley not only fulfilled the duties of a president, but he made it a point to preach every day, and to improve these occasions for giving special advice to the preachers and to the members.[2] It frequently happened that from fifteen

[1] Tyerman, *Life of Wesley*, vol. iii. p. 496.

[2] These are a few of the texts from which Wesley preached at the Conference of 1789. They will show the character of his discourses. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. xxii. 6). "We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (Gal. v. 5). "Woe unto the world, because of offences" (Matt. xviii. 7). "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men,

hundred to two thousand people attended the Sacrament service.

It was not only at Conference time that the father of Methodism loved to speak to the societies, in order to exhort them to remain faithful. During the last years of his life he published, in the *Arminian Magazine*, about sixty sermons, generally on subjects relating to the needs of the Methodists, and to the evils that might threaten them. In these sermons Wesley often alluded to the dangers attending material prosperity, luxury, and worldliness; he insisted on practical duties, such as diligence, sobriety, and liberality. In his "Thoughts upon Methodism," which appeared in the same periodical in 1787, he says: "I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out."[1]

In his intercourse with the societies, Wesley knew how to combine firmness and moderation: he had a wonderful gift for governing. Very seldom did the most violent quarrels persist when he interfered personally. His temper was so amiable, that it prevailed on the most stubborn. His serenity of soul was so great, that others could not but be influenced by it.

Wesley possessed that hopeful mind which seems to be the portion of great souls. And for that reason his old age was radiant and peaceful, instead of being dull and sad, as is too often the case. He brought joy wherever he went as a guest. His conversation, although

that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. ix. 22). "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. iv. 11).

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xiii. p. 225.

it was always serious, could be interesting and cheerful: he instructed others, without assuming those harsh tones which are sure to deter people. The children felt invincibly drawn to the kind old man, of whom their parents related such astonishing stories, and as soon as he appeared they surrounded him. He did not fail to reciprocate such feelings; for all his life he showed a great fondness for children, which he, however, manifested most in his last years.

At a very early stage in his ministry his attention had been drawn to the spiritual wants of children as a class, whilst in that time they were absolutely neglected. He instructed his preachers to bestow the utmost care upon children, and he always enquired, when he travelled, how far they followed his directions in that respect. Such efforts were attended with the happiest results: many children were converted and joined the societies. Kingswood School became a true "school of the prophets." And in the midst of the young pupils, Wesley seemed to grow younger: he took pleasure in watching over their studies and encouraging their efforts.

The establishment of Sunday schools met, from the first, with Wesley's warm approbation; he was among the first who understood how profitable their influence would be to the cause of the Revival. As soon as Robert Raikes issued his pamphlet on the subject, in 1783, Wesley reprinted it in the *Arminian Magazine*. In his *Journal* of the year 1784 he speaks of them in terms almost prophetic: "I find these schools springing up wherever I go; perhaps God may have a deeper end therein than men are aware of. Who knows but some of these schools may become nurseries for Christians?" In 1787 he wrote to one of the preachers, congratulating him on the establishment of a school, and adding: "These schools appear to be one great means which

God will make use of to revive religion in the nation." The year before his death he writes: "This is one of the best institutions which have been seen in Europe for some centuries."

Wesley knew how to speak to children so as to be understood by them, and the children loved to hear him. In a certain place the children one day surrounded him after he had preached, and the aged missionary knelt among them, and began praying with touching fervour on their behalf. In another place he found the street, when he arrived, full of children, who accompanied him to the spot appointed for the preaching, and they would not leave him after the service until he had shaken hands with all of them. Once he was to preach in the church at Raithby: he found a little child sitting on the pulpit stairs; he took it up in his arms and kissed it, then put it down gently after passing up himself.[1] He has related somewhere that a little girl, who wanted to see him, sat up all night and then walked two miles: he took her in his carriage and brought her back home, after enjoying her simple conversation.[2]

Wesley never had children of his own, but he was very fond of those of others. He adopted, as it were, Sarah Wesley, his brother's daughter. He often asked as a favour permission to take her with him in his journeys through England, and he treated her with a father's care and tenderness.

Wesley's pastoral activity was not confined to personal intercourse with his societies, but included a vast amount of epistolary correspondence. From all quarters letters were addressed to him, requesting counsel and advice; and he regarded it as a duty to reply to them. A large number of his letters have been preserved, and they

[1] *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1840.

[2] Stevens, *History of Methodism*, vol. ii. p. 202.

show the energy he threw into his work, and the attention he paid to its smallest details. When we add to this pastoral correspondence, that which he was constantly carrying on with the majority of his preachers, as the necessities of the work required, we shall be struck with amazement at the immense responsibilities that weighed upon this valiant octogenarian.

His last journeys were particularly affecting. "Among his older societies in England," says the historian already quoted, "his visits are attended with unprecedented success and affecting interest. The age of the venerable man saddens the people more than himself. Toward the close of this decade there are solemn leave-takings as he passes along his routes. At each visit they expect to see his face no more; and at every place, after giving to his societies what he wished them to receive as his last advice,—to love as brethren, to fear God, and honour the king,—he uniformly gives out and sings with them the following lines—

> Oh that without a lingering groan
> I may the welcome word receive;
> My body with my charge lay down,
> And cease at once to work and live!

. . . The Methodists flock from place to place to hear him, for they know the privilege must soon cease. Companies go out to meet him, and conduct him into the towns. His preachers, who are now numerous in most parts of the land, gather in his assemblies, refreshing themselves by his ministrations, and by their mutual greetings: he is to them as Elijah to 'the sons of the prophets,' a man who had uttered wondrous words and wrought miracles in Israel, and the day of whose ascension in the chariot of fire is at hand."[1]

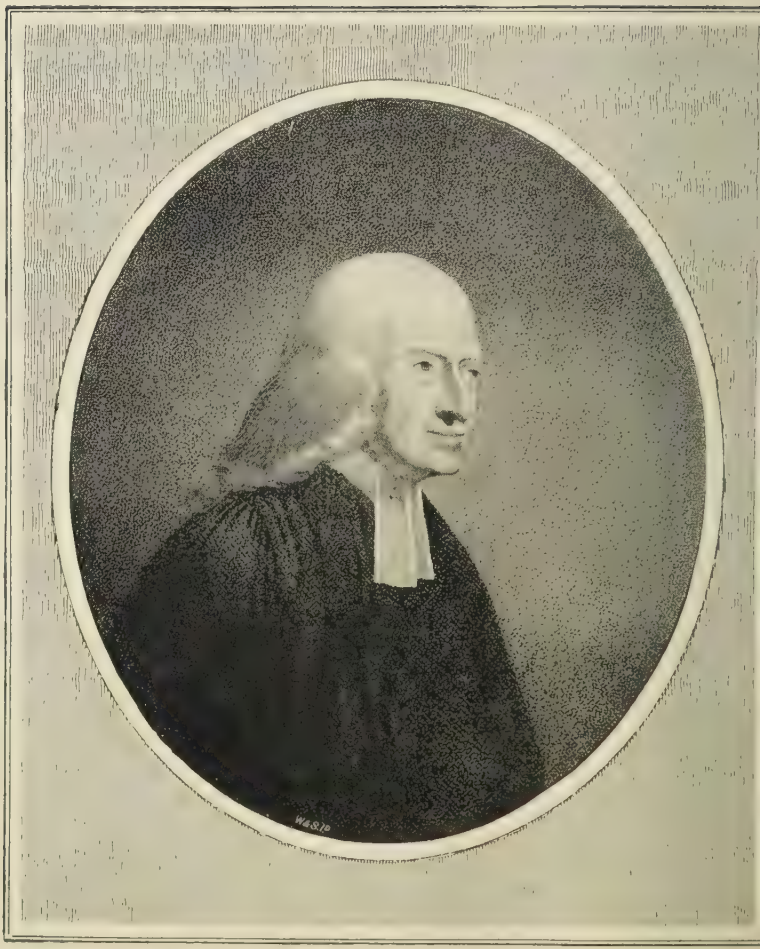
Wesley's missionary labours during this last decade

[1] Stevens, *History of Methodism*, vol. ii. p. 243.

were not limited to Great Britain itself. In response to a pressing invitation, he paid two visits to Holland, where his reputation had been widely spread, and where many Christians desired to see him. He preached in English at the Hague, Utrecht, Amsterdam, and Rotterdam, conversed in Latin with many ministers and professors, whose spirit seemed to him to be excellent; and was received with profound respect by some of the best families in the land, whose solid piety was a source of great delight to his mind. He returned full of the praises of Holland and the Dutch. "We always looked upon the Dutch as a heavy, dull, stoical people; but truly, most—nay, I may say, all—with whom we conversed familiarly were as tender-hearted and as earnestly affectionate as the Irish themselves."[1]

A little later he visited the Channel Islands also. Methodism had been imported into these islands, not direct from England, but from Newfoundland, where two Jersey merchants had been converted under a Methodist preacher. On returning to their native country in 1774, they laboured to promote the salvation of their neighbours; and, their efforts being crowned with success, they wrote to Wesley to request his help. He sent to their assistance, in 1784, Robert Carr Brackenbury, a wealthy man and a talented preacher, who was able to speak French, the language used in the Channel Islands, and who settled in Jersey. Two years later, Adam Clarke, who became so celebrated for biblical learning, came also to Guernsey. The increasing success of the work induced Wesley to visit the islands himself in 1787. At Guernsey he was entertained by the De Jersey family, whose house, called "Mon-Plaisir," was the home of the preachers, and who shortly after gave to the French work one of its missionary pioneers,

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xiii. p. 63.



JOHN WESLEY.
(*Painted by John Barry.*)

Rev. Henry De Jersey, who died in 1870. At Jersey he enjoyed a most cordial reception, was entertained by the most distinguished families, and preached to eager multitudes the Word of Truth. In the country parishes, where English was not understood, Wesley availed himself of the services of Brackenbury as an interpreter.

The state of the work in the islands gratified him exceedingly: he found it marvellously increased, in spite of many unfavourable circumstances. He met there with many Christians whose devotion was not surpassed by that of any in England. He mentions particularly Jane Bisson, of Jersey, a young lady of nineteen, as a person of extraordinary piety. "She seems," he says, "to be wholly devoted to God, and to have constant communion with Him. She has a clear and strong understanding, and I cannot perceive the least tincture of enthusiasm. I am afraid she will not live long. I am amazed at the grace of God which is in her. I think she is far beyond Madame Guyon[1] in deep communion with God; and I doubt whether I have found her fellow in England. Precious as my time is, it would have been worth my while to come to Jersey, had it been only to see this prodigy of grace." He was so struck with her piety, that he desired to correspond with her; and the thirteen letters addressed to her, the last of which is dated but a few months before

[1] Wesley entertained a real esteem for Madame Guyon's character and writings: he even published a short Life of her. "I believe," he writes (vol. xiv. p. 290), "she was not only a good woman, but good in an eminent degree; deeply devoted to God, and often favoured with uncommon communications of His Spirit." But his acute mind could not fail to notice and to denounce her errors. "The grand source of all her mistakes," he says, "was this, the not being guided by the written Word. She did not take the Scripture for the rule of her actions; at most, it was but the secondary rule. Inward impressions, which she called inspirations, were her primary rule" (*ibid.*, p. 291).

his death, show the paternal care with which he fostered the best interests of those who shared his pastoral oversight.

The visit of Wesley was a blessing to the societies in the Channel Islands, and it gave them a fresh impulse. Adam Clarke wrote to him: "Your visit to this isle (Guernsey) has been, in the hand of God, a means of much good. The congregations have ever since been considerably enlarged; and several of the better sort who attended your preaching have continued to come ever since." [1]

The societies in the islands had sprung up spontaneously and without foreign assistance: they were also becoming well organised, being already provided with a body of preachers who could address the people in their own tongue. At the time of Wesley's visit, a young man, named John De Quetteville, originally from Jersey, had already spent one year in the work of the ministry, and for more than half a century he continued to be identified therewith. In view of such rapid progress, Wesley was fully persuaded that the societies of the Channel Islands possessed an unmistakable vitality, and that a great future was reserved for them. He perceived clearly the important part they might play in the evangelisation of the neighbouring country. It is said that, standing one day within sight of the coast, and speaking of the impossibility of his ever undertaking the evangelisation of France, the aged missionary pointed to the dusky cliffs that skirted the horizon, and expressed his conviction that the Channel Isles were destined to take part in the work of the conversion of France. Three

[1] Dr. Lelièvre's *Histoire du Méthodisme dans les Iles de la Manche*, p. 266. Letter from A. Clarke to John Wesley, 29th October 1787. This letter, with many others unpublished in English, was communicated to the author by the late Rev. Benjamin Hellier.

years later this prediction began to be verified, and down to the present day the islands have faithfully striven to realise Wesley's expectations, having furnished a great number of labourers to the work of the gospel in France.[1]

Wesley's journey back to England was marked by an interesting incident, which is thus related in the Autobiography of Adam Clarke, who accompanied him. The wind blew fairly for their course to Penzance as they sailed out of Guernsey road, but soon slackened till it died away, and then, rising in the opposite quarter, freshened into a stiff, contrary breeze; and much time was spent in frequent tacking before they could well clear the island.

"Mr. Wesley was sitting reading in the cabin, and, hearing the noise and bustle occasioned by putting the vessel about to stand on her different tacks, he put his head above and enquired what was the matter. Being told the wind was become contrary, and the ship was obliged thus to tack, he said, 'Then let us go to prayer.' His own company who were upon deck walked down, and at his request Dr. Coke, Mr. Bradford, and Mr. Clarke went to prayer. After the latter had ended, Mr. Wesley broke out into fervent supplication, which seemed to be more the offspring of strong faith than of mere desire, in words remarkable as well as the spirit, feeling, and manner in which they were uttered. Some of them were to the following effect: 'Almighty and everlasting God, Thou hast Thy way everywhere, and all things serve the purposes of Thy will: Thou holdest the winds in Thy

[1] In 1791 a few Methodists from Guernsey visited Caen and the neighbourhood. Shortly after, Mr. Mahy established himself there as a regular preacher, and continued his labours in Normandy for several years with some success. See my *History of Methodism in the Channel Islands*, p. 402, and following.

fists, and sittest upon the water-floods, and reignest King for ever. Command these winds and these waves that they obey THEE, and take us speedily and safely to the haven whither we would be.' The power of his petition was felt by all. He rose from his knees, made no kind of remark, but took up his book and continued his reading. Mr. Clarke went up on deck, and what was his surprise when he found the vessel standing on her right course with a steady breeze, which slackened not till, carrying them at the rate of nine or ten knots an hour, they anchored safely near St. Michael's Mount in Penzance Bay! On the sudden and favourable change of the wind Mr. Wesley made no remark: so fully did he expect to be heard, that he took it for granted he was heard."[1]

Such was Wesley's activity, that all England was too narrow a field for it: it sought yet wider expansion. He had said, "The world is my parish," and before he died he saw the object of his vast Christian ambition beginning to be realised; where he could not go himself, he went in the person of his auxiliaries. It was during this period, in fact, that Methodism began to take deep root in the New World, and to prove its perfect adaptation to the work of missions, properly so called. To this subject we shall return in the next chapter.

Although during the early part of this decade Wesley could still congratulate himself on having almost completely escaped the infirmities of age, toward the close of it he began to experience a change. It was when he was beginning his eighty-fifth year that he first noticed symptoms of declining vigour: he could not walk so fast as he did formerly, his sight was a little decayed, and there was failure of his memory; but he adds: "Nor do I feel such thing as weariness, either in travelling or

[1] *An Account of Adam Clarke*, p. 259.

preaching: and I am not conscious of any decay in writing sermons, which I do as readily and, I believe, as correctly as ever."[1] On entering his eighty-sixth year, in 1789, he says: "I now find I grow old. . . . What I should be afraid of is, if I took thought for the morrow, that my body should weigh down my mind; and create either stubbornness, by the decrease of my understanding, or peevishness, by the increase of bodily infirmities: but Thou shalt answer for me, O Lord, my God!"[2]

God spared His servant the decline of his faculties which he feared. He retained his marvellous lucidity of intellect, and was enabled to the last to devote his whole attention to the great religious movement of which he had been so eminent a promoter.

His earlier fellow-labourers had many of them long since disappeared, and during these last years of his life he was called to witness the departure of the few survivors. He took leave of them in perfect serenity of mind, as one parts from friends whom one hopes to see shortly again. Now we find him at the bedside of Thomas Maxfield, his first lay-preacher, from whom he had been compelled to separate, but for whom he had retained a deep affection. Then he calls on Perronet, the venerable vicar of Shoreham, to receive the last counsels and benedictions of this aged patriarch of the Revival, who had passed his ninetieth year. At another time it is Delamotte, his ancient companion in Georgia, whom he finds bending also under the weight of years, and preparing to pass from the burdens and trials of life into his final rest. A little later, Thompson, the rector of St. Gennis, and Wesley's Cornish coadjutor, finding himself assailed by doubts and fears at the approach of death, sends for him, partakes of the Lord's Supper with

[1] *Journal*, 28th June 1788. [2] *Ibid.*, 28th June 1789.

him, and regains during the interview the calm and confident faith which had been for a moment disturbed.

Two other losses Wesley suffered, which affected him the most deeply of all. In 1785 died, in the full triumph of faith, the sainted John Fletcher, whose life had been that of a saint and an apostle. In losing him, Wesley lost his best friend, his best adviser. No man in England, not even his brother, entered so deeply into his sympathies, and understood so thoroughly his mission. He was the St. John of the Revival, while Wesley was its St. Paul. Everything in him, the heart as well as the intellect, responded to the Methodist movement; and it is no small honour that it should have had the sanction of his lofty intelligence and profound piety. Wesley had long entertained the thought that he might leave the superintendence of the work to him after his death, and was deeply affected by his loss. "Within fourscore years," he says, "I have known many excellent men, holy in heart and life, but one equal to him I have not known; one so uniformly and deeply devoted to God. So unblamable a man, in every respect, I have not found either in Europe or America, nor do I expect to find another such on this side of eternity."[1]

Three years later, in 1788, in his brother Charles, he lost another faithful companion of his ministry. With all the intrepidity which distinguished his character, he had shared his brother's early struggles; but he soon renounced an itinerant life, and settled with his family in Bristol, and afterwards in London, where he still exercised his ministry, preaching in the chapels, and visiting the sick and the prisoners. A poet of the first rank, a distinguished orator, ardent and enthusiastic in temperament, he threw himself fully into the work his brother was carrying on, and in some respects formed his

[1] Wesley's *Life of Mr. Fletcher*, at the conclusion.

complement and counterpart. He was wanting, however, in the qualities essential to the legislator and organiser, and he sometimes hampered his brother's action by his exaggerated ecclesiastical scruples. Nevertheless, he was one of the choicest labourers engaged in the Revival of the eighteenth century.

This is the account of Charles Wesley's death, sent by his daughter Sarah to her uncle, who was at that time travelling in the north:—

"Dear and Honoured Uncle,—We were all present when my dear, respected father departed this life. His end was, what he particularly wished it might be, peace! For some months past he seemed totally detached from earth. He spoke very little, nor wished to hear anything read but the Scriptures. He took a solemn leave of all his friends. . . . All his prayer was, 'Patience, and an easy death.' He bade everyone who visited him to supplicate for these; often repeating 'An easy death!' He told my mother, the week before he departed, that no fiend was permitted to approach him; and said to us all, 'I have a good hope!' When we asked if he wanted anything, he frequently answered, 'Nothing but Christ.' Some person observed that the valley of the shadow of death was hard to be passed. 'Not with Christ,' replied he. . . . The last morning, which was the 29th of March, being unable to speak, my mother entreated him to press her hand, if he knew her; which he feebly did. His last words which I could hear were, 'Lord—my heart,—my God!' He then drew his breath short, and the last so gently that we knew not exactly the moment in which his happy spirit fled."[1]

While the hand of death was thus removing Wesley's

[1] Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 442.

first fellow-labourers, God raised up others in their stead: an ever-increasing number of candidates year by year entered the ranks of the itinerant ministry. Among the recruits of these last ten years were men of varied talents; but the body of preachers could not but be adorned as well as strengthened by such men as Joyce, Bramwell, Reece, Dickinson, Entwisle, Creighton, and Adam Clarke.

All the deaths that Wesley witnessed added their testimony to that of his infirmities, and told that his end was nigh. The prospect, far from being alarming, was to him delightful. His work was done, and well done. Its future success was a certainty, as far as certainty is permitted to faith that stays itself upon God, and does not despise the dictates of prudence. Before dwelling on the closing scenes of his life, we must take notice of the measures adopted in 1784 to ensure the continuance and stability of Methodism.

CHAPTER IV

ORGANISATION OF METHODISM IN ENGLAND AND IN AMERICA

(1784)

The year 1784 has been called by Dr. Whitehead the *climacteric* year of Methodism,[1] because it was during its course that Wesley gave a legal charter to his English societies, and an episcopal organisation to the American ones. These steps deserve to be described carefully.

Up to this time the Methodist chapels in the United Kingdom, which, according to Myles,[2] already numbered 359, had been settled according to the provisions of a model deed published by Wesley, to the effect that the trustees should permit Wesley himself, and such other persons as he might from time to time appoint, to have the free use of such premises, to preach therein the Word of God. In case of his death, his brother was to succeed to all his rights, and after them the Conference of preachers was appointed to name those who should occupy the pulpits. But when lawyers were consulted as to the validity of these deeds, they answered that they were absolutely void as long as the Conference had not been recognised by Government, and authorised to acquire and possess property.

[1] Whitehead, *Life of Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 404. Southey, *Life of Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 244.

[2] Myles, *Chronological History*.

This prospect threatened the future of Methodism as a body. Wesley saw it, and, in order to remedy this, he prepared his "Deed of Declaration," which was enrolled in the Court of Chancery the 9th of March 1784. From the text of that deed [1] it appears that it was intended to explain the meaning of the term "Yearly Conference of the people called Methodists," and "to declare what persons are members of the said Conference, and how the succession and identity thereof is to be continued."

According to this deed, the official Conference consisted of one hundred preachers, who were in the first instance chosen and named by John Wesley. The following rules were registered for the conduct of Conference: — 1. It was to meet once a year. 2. Every act voted by the majority of the Conference was to be considered as the act of the whole. 3. Its first duty was to be the filling up of vacancies occasioned, by death or absence, in the Legal Conference. 4. No act of Conference was to be valid except it had been voted upon by at least forty of the preachers. 5. The Yearly Conference was to last not less than five days, and not more than three weeks. 6. After filling up vacancies, the Conference was to elect a president and a secretary, both of them to continue in their functions until the next Conference. 7. Every member of Conference who failed to attend two years in succession, without having obtained leave, was to be considered as having resigned. 8. The Conference had the right to expel unworthy members of that body. 9. It was the Conference which admitted as preachers of the gospel, after trying and examining them, the men that it judged fit for that office. 10. No one could be a member of Conference unless he

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. iv. p. 503.

had been admitted as a preacher for a year at least. 11. The Conference had not the right to appoint as a preacher for one of the chapels, any one who was not among its members, or admitted in connection with it, or upon trial; nor had it the right to appoint any person for more than three years successively, except ordained ministers of the Church of England. 12. The Conference could, when it seemed expedient so to do, meet in other places than London, Bristol, or Leeds. 13. It was to send, when necessary, to Ireland, or other parts out of the Kingdom of Great Britain, delegates who would act in its name with full powers. 14. All resolutions and decisions of the Conference were to be entered in the Journal or Minutes, and signed by the President and the Secretary. 15. If at any time the Conference was reduced below the number of forty members, and continued thus reduced for three yearly assemblies successively, or if the members declined or neglected to meet for three successive years, in either case the Conference of the people called Methodists would be "extinguished, and all the aforesaid powers, privileges, and advantages shall cease." In such a case the chapels would remain vested in the trustees, with the understanding that they would appoint to preach the Word of God therein, such persons as would seem proper to them.

This document, which was to become the legal charter of Methodism, was not received with unanimous approval by Wesley's fellow-workers. Those among them who had not been named by him as members of the official Conference considered themselves as ill-treated, and several protested by withdrawing. Wesley then declared that the limitation of the members to a hundred did not imply on his part a want of confidence in those who were not thus appointed, but was caused

by the impossibility of assembling a more numerous body. He wrote a letter which was to be read at the first Conference held after his decease, and by which he exhorted the members of that body "to never avail themselves of the Deed of Declaration to assume any superiority over their brethren."[1] That precaution was not a vain one, and the Conference made a wise concession by allowing, at an early period, all preachers in full connexion the right to vote. Thus the legal Conference, still consisting of a hundred members, is now a formal and honorary body, which gives legal validity to the measures voted by the general Conference, but never decides anything by itself.

No doubt this deed was defective; in this respect, that it tied down the Conference too closely, and prevented for a long time the introduction of some necessary improvements, such as the direct representation of the laymen of the societies in the supreme assembly of Methodism. It is only in our days, and not without some struggles, that the Conference, by putting a more liberal construction upon the terms of its constitutional deed, has admitted into its own composition a fair proportion of the lay element.

Wesley, in acting thus, thought chiefly of providing for the unity and duration of his work, and saw exclusively the advantages accruing from that step, as securing the desired results, and also as maintaining some features of his system, which he justly esteemed very important, —for instance, the itinerancy among the preachers. Whatever imperfections this constitutional document may have contained, it must have answered pretty well the requirements of the case, since it has subsisted for more than a century without preventing Methodism from growing and developing itself after its founder's death,

[1] Tyerman, *Life of Wesley*, vol. iii. p. 424. Myles's *History*, p. 201.

whilst retaining the special character which it received from his great mind.

It was in the same year, 1784, that Wesley framed the definitive constitution of American Methodism. We have already related what were the beginnings of that work. In a few years it had extended considerably. It had begun hardly fifteen years before, and now it numbered about 15,000 members and more than 80 travelling preachers. Its sphere extended from the West Indies in the south to Nova Scotia and Newfoundland in the north. Such a rapid growth, which was not checked even by the prolonged struggle of the American Revolution, could not fail to give rise to questions of organisation both delicate and pressing.

When Wesley's preachers arrived in the New World, they regarded themselves as occupying the same relative position toward the Church of England clergy there as their brethren at home. They considered themselves as self-instituted auxiliaries of the regular clergy: they did not presume to fulfil special ecclesiastical functions, and refused to administer the Sacraments. Such a line of conduct was more and more impracticable in England, and altogether impossible to follow in America. With a population scattered over a vast extent of country, and always on the increase, and with clergy few in number and wanting in zeal, and who confined their efforts to the great cities, to remain in this subordinate relation would have been seriously to cripple and, in fact, to renounce the magnificent enterprise which God had committed to Methodism.

The War of Independence brought the question to a narrow issue, and necessitated its solution on the "liberal" side. This great Revolution for a while threatened the very life of the cause: most of the English preachers in America believed it their duty to employ their influence

in counteracting the insurrection, and to remain faithful to the Government of their own country. Hence, throughout the period of the war, their situation was exceedingly embarrassing: some were imprisoned, others sought concealment, and others returned to England. But when the triumph of the Revolution had secured the independence of the United States, the preachers perceived that they had no other alternative than to give in a loyal adhesion to the new order of things. Their sovereign, indeed, set them the example in those remarkable words of his, addressed to the ambassador of the new republic on his first reception at Court: "I was the last in my kingdom to recognise your independence, and I shall be the last to violate it." In rallying to the side of the new Government, the leaders of American Methodism carried with them the sanction of the great majority of their societies. Like the country to which they belonged, they were now about to enter upon an entirely new phase of existence.

The new Government wisely declined the responsibility of establishing a State religion; and hence the Anglican Church ceased to retain its peculiar privileges, and was placed on a level with all others. Its revenues, like those of the nonconforming Churches generally, were limited to the voluntary contributions of its flocks. Such a position was a most unenviable one for the clergy; and, with such uncertain prospects before them, the greater part judged it prudent to retire: their flight became, in fact, a general *sauve-qui-peut*. The fall of the Anglican Church, notwithstanding its great name, was an event full of significance. In Virginia, before the Revolution, it counted ninety-one pastors; of these, at the close of the war, there only remained twenty-eight, the rest having returned to England. In the other parts of the country the Established Church had never been

strong, and the march of events had led to its dissolution. The way therefore was open for a successor, and that successor must be whichever of the Churches might prove itself worthy of the post. The crisis was one of the highest moment, and demanded heroic resolution.

Wesley understood the situation. He had hitherto intended that American Methodism should retain the position of a parasitical plant, growing up under the protection of a great tree: but now God had laid low the mighty oak, and it was His will that the new work should henceforth live a life of its own.

Wesley was not slow to perceive that the American societies needed to be placed upon an independent basis. For a long time they too had demanded the administration of the Sacraments by their own preachers: in many places the children were growing up without baptism, and the members of the societies met without partaking of the Lord's Supper. The demand became so urgent, and was backed by arguments so powerful, that there was considerable danger of a schism if the wants of the people remained longer unsupplied. The Southern preachers, seeing that the question was not advancing towards a settlement, met together in Virginia, in the year 1779, and resolved that the three oldest of the brethren should lay hands upon the rest. This was accordingly done, and for a year the societies in those parts received the Sacraments from the hands of their preachers. This bold step must have led to a lamentable schism had not Asbury, by a policy of conciliation, succeeded in effecting a compromise, which practically suspended the operation of this measure until Wesley had been consulted.

The gravity of these indications could not be mistaken. Wesley had to choose between two alternatives, either to sacrifice a work evidently destined for a great future,

by making himself the obstinate champion of ecclesiastical prejudices, or to break loose from those prejudices altogether, and so secure the future development and prosperity of these new-born Churches. As soon as the problem assumed this definite form, both conscience and reason concurred in his decision. As to the steps which were to be adopted, he wished to avoid unnecessary haste: and, first of all, he resolved to make advances to the Anglican Episcopate. Hence he addressed two several letters to the Bishop of London, earnestly requesting ordination for one of his preachers, in order that he might visit the societies for the purpose of administering the Sacraments, and thus provide for the most pressing necessities of the case. "I mourn," says he to the prelate, "for poor America, for the sheep scattered up and down therein; part of them have no shepherds at all, particularly in the Northern colonies; and the case of the rest is little better, for their own shepherds pity them not."[1] The bishop having refused to grant him this request, Wesley felt that nothing more was to be expected from that quarter, and decided to cut the Gordian knot.

Wesley entertained a sincere affection for the Established Church, and still considered himself as one of its ministers. He preferred Episcopacy to other organisations, although he could not approve the extravagant abuse of the Anglican system. Besides, Episcopacy itself had lost in his sight a great part of its prestige, since, by studying the origin of Christianity, he had come to the conclusion that both the words *bishop* and *elder* were used primarily to designate the same functions. These were not with him new convictions, derived from the circumstances of the moment; they were the offspring of his whole spiritual growth. We have seen how, forty

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xiii. p. 143.

years earlier, in 1746, he declared that, after a serious investigation, he had been brought to acknowledge that bishops and presbyters are (essentially) of one order."[1] The same idea reappears in his *Notes on the New Testament*, where he gives it as his opinion that "the names *bishop* and *presbyter* were promiscuously used in the first ages."[2] So far back as 1761, in a letter to a friend, he confesses that he does not at all admit that none but episcopal ordination is valid.[3] Far from conceding the divine right of Episcopacy, he declares, in 1756, "That it is prescribed in Scripture, I do not believe"; and he adds, after Bishop Stillingfleet, "Neither Christ nor His apostles prescribe any particular form of church government."[4]

These quotations, which might easily be multiplied, prove that Wesley had adopted, at an early period of his ministry, independent views as to ecclesiastical questions, a thing very rare in his day. So that the organisation of the Methodist Church of America was not, as some have said, the caprice or the mistake of an old man, but the natural result of his entire previous development. Such was the real state of his mind when he declared: "I firmly believe, I am a scriptural επισκοπος, as much as any man in England or in Europe: for the uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable, which no man ever did or can prove."[5]

Thus free from prejudice on this point, and possessed of settled convictions, he only delayed making his societies independent in obedience to the ruling principle of his ministry, namely, to wait for providential openings before entering on a new path. But now those providential indications had come, and they beckoned him onward.

[1] See p. 298.
[2] Note on Philip. i. 1.
[3] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xiii. p. 236.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 211.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 253.

When Wesley found himself decidedly called upon to organise his American societies as self-governing churches, he did not hesitate to adopt for them the episcopal system, as being more likely than any other to maintain a close and firm unity between the various parts of the work, a principle which he considered of the utmost importance. Fully convinced of his duty, and in no wise afraid of the opposition he could not fail to arouse, he communicated his design to a few friends. His brother Charles, having strong ecclesiastical prejudices, declared himself openly against the scheme; but John Fletcher gave Wesley his hearty and complete approval. In February 1784, Wesley finally opened his mind to the man he had chosen to found and organise American Methodism. Dr. Coke was indeed the man best fitted to undertake and accomplish so difficult a task, uniting in himself the qualifications for a missionary and an organiser. Wesley reminded him of the peculiar circumstances in which the American societies were placed, and of the dangers that threatened them if left to themselves. He then laid before him his plans for their organisation into a Church, and asked whether he would be willing to carry them into execution. If so, Wesley considered himself called upon, as general superintendent of the work, to lay hands on him, and so delegate to him the power to organise the new Church. He followed in that matter the example of the ancient Church of Alexandria, in which, on the death of a bishop, the elders met to lay hands on one of their number, that he might fill the vacant seat, thus making the bishop *primus inter pares*, the first among his peers or equals.[1]

Dr. Coke begged for time to consider the subject.

[1] Drew's *Life of Coke*, p. 62. Etheridge's *Life of Coke*, p. 100. Stevens's *History of the M. E. Church*, vol. ii. p. 165.

For two months he gave it his serious attention, and at the end of that time he made known his decision to Wesley; he admitted Wesley's reasoning, but he thought it would be prudent to wait a little longer before executing this plan. Such, however, was not the opinion of the next Conference, which met at Leeds in July of the same year, for it fully approved of the scheme proposed by Wesley. Fletcher took an active part in the deliberations, and his advice helped in a great measure to bring about this weighty decision. Coke could hesitate no longer when he saw his brethren unanimous, and on the 2nd September 1784, at Bristol, he was solemnly ordained by Wesley, assisted by the Rev. James Creighton, and set apart for the work of a superintendent: such were the terms used by Wesley in the certificate he delivered to him. By carefully avoiding to use the word *bishop*, he intended to show that the office entrusted by him to Coke resembled in no wise the Anglican Episcopate, and that the original of this ordination was to be sought not in the traditions of the Establishment, but in those of the Apostolic Church. At a later period the American Churches thought it proper to give their leaders that historical and biblical title of their office; and they certainly had the right to do so. After ordaining Coke, Wesley also set apart, by imposition of hands, two preachers, Vasey and Whatcoat, who were to accompany him as elders to America.

There is no doubt that, in a strict Anglican point of view, such ordinations were perfectly void. That of Coke, especially, was strongly criticised; Wesley, it was said, did not himself possess episcopal power, and therefore could not confer it. According to canon law, this is certainly true. For our part, not sharing in the ecclesiastic ideas of Anglicanism, we cannot

espouse her quarrel. We would rather say that Wesley waited too long before coming to a resolution which was essential to the prosperity of the work. The episcopal form answering better than any other the intentions and the wishes of the new American Church, we cannot see why Wesley should not have decided for the plan which was so much criticised by his adversaries. Was not that old servant of the Lord, who for half a century did a work all over the United Kingdom the like of which had not been seen since apostolic days, endowed by God Himself with an Episcopate a thousand times superior to and truer than that of those bishops who, like Lavington and Warburton, were so persistent in their opposition to him? Let ecclesiastical formalism condemn Wesley in this matter, both conscience and common sense acquit him.

On the 3rd of November 1784, Coke, with his two colleagues, reached the United States, and soon after ordained as a bishop, Francis Asbury, whose talents and virtues had made him, for several years, the true leader of American Methodism. Toward the close of the same year a Conference, comprising about sixty ministers, met at Baltimore and laid the foundations of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Neither these ministers nor Wesley himself could have guessed that the Church, which they thus organised in the midst of much contradiction and opposition, would have such a splendid future as it has had, and become the largest and most active Church of the New World. Its extraordinary success is the best answer that could be made to the objections raised against Wesley's plan. If Methodist Episcopacy does not spring from the pretended apostolical succession, its history affords numerous proofs of the divine approval. And whilst, in our days, the Anglican Church has to

contend with the combined evils of ritualism and rationalism, the American Methodist Episcopal Church prospers and grows, proving by its rapid progress how well Wesley's scheme was adapted to the requirements of that missionary work.

After what he had done for America, Wesley must have found it difficult to decline accomplishing the same offices for his societies at home. But he believed it to be his duty not to make too great haste: the circumstances were widely different, and he acted with the greatest circumspection, wishing to be guided by the course of events. The necessities of the work and the prospect of approaching death decided him, however, to take some steps in this direction. In 1785, he writes in his *Journal*: "*August* 1.—Having, with a few select friends, weighed the matter thoroughly, I yielded to their judgment, and set apart three of our well-tried preachers, John Pawson, Thomas Hanby, and Joseph Taylor, to minister in Scotland."

In the following year he ordained Joshua Keighley and Charles Atmore for Scotland, William Warrener for Antigua, William Hammet for Newfoundland. In 1787 he ordained five more; in 1788, nine; in 1789, two; in all, twenty-three.

These ordinations did not take place in public. They were mostly in view of Scotland or America. For a long time Wesley refused to ordain his preachers in England. Mather, Moore, and Rankin are the only exceptions. Wesley made it a point of conforming to the existing state of things, except when it was absolutely necessary to depart from it. He sincerely believed that he remained a faithful member of the Church of England, even whilst exercising functions which, in that Church, are exclusively reserved for the bishops. His brother was strongly opposed to these ordinations, and did all he could

to prevent them: he accused Wesley of acting like a Dissenter, and in contradiction with his whole past ministry. This is Wesley's answer to him:—

"I no more separate from the Church now than I did in 1758. I submit still (though sometimes with a doubting conscience) to 'mitred infidels.' I do, indeed, vary from them in some points of doctrine, and in some points of discipline (by preaching abroad, for instance, by praying *ex-tempore*, and by forming societies); but not a hair's breadth further than I believe to be meet, right, and my bounden duty. I walk still by the same rule I have done for between forty and fifty years. I do nothing rashly. It is not likely I should. The high day of my blood is over. If you will go on hand in hand with me, do. But do not hinder me, if you will not help. Perhaps if you had kept close to me, I might have done better. However, with or without help, I creep on; and as I have been hitherto, so I trust I shall always be, your affectionate friend and brother."

Although Wesley did not authorise his preachers, except under very special circumstances, to administer the Sacraments, he acknowledged that such a state of things could not last indefinitely, and he felt that his successors were not likely to confine themselves to the unsatisfactory condition of being the self-instituted and openly disavowed auxiliaries of the Anglican clergy. The way of emancipation was now opening before the Methodist societies, and they were to follow in it resolutely until they had attained an independence which belonged to them by right.

The last Conferences which Wesley attended showed a real advance in that direction. In 1785 it was decided that religious services might be held in chapels at the same hours as in churches, wherever the Anglican clergyman was notoriously impious or heretical; also

wherever the churches could not hold more than half the population, and wherever there was no church within two or three miles. In 1788 the rule was still further relaxed, according to the wishes of the societies, and it was decided that they might meet in the chapels in church-hours, except on Communion days, and that the societies were free to introduce the Liturgy in their worship or to leave it out.

In closing this chapter, it may be convenient to say that the Conferences which followed immediately after Wesley's death had the difficult task to solve the problem he had left unsolved. In 1793 all societies which were unanimous in their wish for the Sacraments were authorised to have them administered to their members. At last, after the societies had been much agitated, the Conference of 1795 voted a "Plan of Pacification," which allowed the societies to establish Sacramental services wherever a majority of the trustees, stewards, and leaders manifested to Conference that such was their desire. This plan restored peace to most of the societies, and opened the way for a still more complete emancipation.

CHAPTER V

THE LAST EFFORTS OF WESLEY—HIS DEATH

On the first of January 1790, Wesley wrote in his *Journal*: "I am now an old man, decayed from head to foot. My eyes are dim; my right hand shakes much; my mouth is hot and dry every morning; I have a lingering fever almost every day; my motion is weak and slow. However, blessed be God, I do not slack my labour: I can preach and write still."[1]

He did, in fact, pursue these his ordinary labours through this last year, notwithstanding the increasing infirmities of age. "He still rose at his hour," says his biographer and friend, Moore, meaning at four o'clock, "and went through the many duties of the day,—not, indeed, with the same apparent vigour, but without complaint, and with a degree of resolution that was astonishing."[2]

Although now eighty-seven years old, he persisted in thinking that frequent preaching was not so much a fatigue as an excellent exercise. At the same time that he advised Adam Clarke, who was not well, to see his own physician, Dr. Whitehead, and to follow his prescriptions, he took care to add, "except the leaving off preaching. I think, if I had taken this advice many years since, I should not have been a living man."[3]

[1] Wesley's *Journal*, 1st January 1790.
[2] *Life of Wesley*, by Moore, vol. ii. p. 380
[3] Dunn, *Life of A. Clarke*, p. 72.

The first months of this year were devoted to London and its vicinity. On the 3rd of January he writes: "I suppose near two thousand met at the New Chapel to renew their covenant with God; a scriptural means of grace which is now almost everywhere forgotten, except among the Methodists."

On the 14th of February: "I preached a sermon to the children at West Street Chapel. They flocked together from every quarter; and truly God was in the midst of them, applying those words, 'Come, ye children; hearken unto me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord.'" On the following Sunday he again preached to the children in City Road Chapel.

On the 27th: "In the evening I had such a congregation at Snowfields as has not been seen there for many years. Afterwards I met the penitents for the last time. They quite filled the room; and God was in the midst of them."

On the 28th: "We have not had such a congregation at the New Chapel since the renewal of the covenant, nor such a blessing; the hearts of the people were like melting wax. Most of them were in tears; and I trust they will not soon forget the exhortation which was then given them. In the afternoon I preached at West Street Chapel on Ephesians v. 1, 2. The chapel would not near contain the congregation. All that could squeeze in seemed much affected, and it was with difficulty I broke through and took chaise for Brentford, where I came before six o'clock. The congregation, here also, was by far the largest I ever saw here, so that it seems our labour, even here, will not be in vain."

As the last quotation shows, Wesley could still, on an emergency, preach three times on the Sunday, and always in the most acceptable manner. His

preaching was attended by such a power as conquered the hearts, and by an unction which softened them.

In the beginning of March he commenced his last great missionary journey through England and Scotland, which was to last five months. Early in the year his friends in London had sent a circular to all the societies, announcing his intention to visit them, and indicating the route he was to take, and the places at which he was to preach, from Stroud to Aberdeen. It concluded in the following terms: "We earnestly recommend that Mr. Wesley be remembered in prayer, especially at the next Quarterly Fast, that his strength may be sustained and even increased, if it be the will of God."[1]

This last visit of Wesley to his societies claims more than a cursory glance.

The first fortnight in March was spent in Bath, Bristol, and Kingswood, where Methodism had been introduced in such a wonderful way fifty years before. In these places Wesley preached every day, visited the sick, and met the members and exhorted them.

At Bristol he "found a people ready prepared for the Lord. The preachers are in earnest, the fruit of which plainly appears in the congregations." Among the Kingswood colliers, who revered him as a father, his visits were always hailed with delight; and now, he says, "I preached to such a congregation as I have not seen there on a week-day for forty years, unless it was at a watch-night." In fact, since his arrival was announced, work was suspended in the collieries and in the fields.

At Stroud, Painswick, Gloucester, Tewkesbury, and

[1] It may be interesting to copy from that circular the route to be followed by Wesley in the later fortnight in March: Monday 15, Stroud; 16, Gloucester; 17, Worcester; 18, Stourport; 19, Birmingham; 22, Wednesbury; 23, Dudley and Wolverhampton; 24, Madeley; 25, Salop; 26, Madeley; 27, Newcastle-under-Lyne; 28, Lane End and Burslem; 29, Congleton; 30, Macclesfield.

Stourport, the congregations were too large for the chapels, and multitudes went away, unable to obtain even standing-room. At Birmingham we see him entering the district in which Methodism had had its greatest conflicts, and achieved some of its most brilliant victories. The society in this town delighted him greatly by the intensity of its spiritual life. On the evening of his arrival an immense congregation of people of all classes assembled to hear him. "The behaviour of the rich and poor is such as does honour to their profession: so decent, so serious, so devout, from the beginning to the end."[1] On the Sunday he preached again at the "new house," which he describes as "admirably well constructed." Hundreds of persons "could not get in." But he says, "I think all who did found that God was there."[2]

Wednesbury, the scene of one of his most fearful persecutions, had now become one of the strongholds of Methodism. "The work of God greatly revives. Business has exceedingly decreased, and most of our old friends have left the town. So much the more have the poor grown in grace, and laid up treasure in heaven. But we were at a great loss in the evening. I could not preach abroad after sunset, and the house would not near contain the people. However, as many as possibly could squeezed in, and their labour was not in vain."

At Dudley he preached in the "new house, one of the neatest in England; it was a profitable season, where two persons, they informed me, found peace with God." At Madeley he no longer found his excellent colleague, Fletcher, now gone to his rest, but he found a living memorial of him in the state of the work, which still continued to increase. The rain "did not hinder the

[1] Wesley's *Journal*, 19th March 1790. [2] *Ibid.*, 21st March 1790.

church from being thoroughly filled, and I believe all who had spiritual discernment perceived that it was filled with the presence of God." He adds, two days after: "I finished my sermon on the wedding garment, perhaps the last that I shall write. My eyes are now waxed dim, my natural force is abated. However, while I can, I would fain do a little for God before I drop into the dust."[1]

After spending three days in the parish of his late friend, Wesley resumed his journey northward, with a spirit even greater than his strength. At Newcastle-under-Lyne and at Burslem, regardless of the additional labour thus imposed upon him, he preached in the open air. At Tunstall he "preached in the new chapel,—the most elegant," he says, "I have seen since I left Bath. My text was, 'Let us go on unto perfection'; and the people seemed to devour the word." At Congleton the principal clergyman, with the mayor and all the heads of the town, was present at his preaching. On Good Friday he reached Manchester, where he spent several days with his excellent friends. On Easter Sunday he preached twice, without fatigue, and administered the Lord's Supper to sixteen hundred communicants. The following day, he tells us, "calling at Altrincham, I was desired to speak a few words to the people in the new chapel; but almost as soon as I got thither the house was filled, and soon after, more than filled. So I preached on 1 Peter i. 3; and many praised God with joyful lips. About twelve I preached in the chapel at Northwich to a large and very lively congregation, and in the evening met once more with our old affectionate friends at Chester. I have never seen this chapel more crowded than to-night; but still it could not near contain the congregation." Thus we see him preaching three times

[1] *Journal*, 26th March 1790.

on Easter Monday, after a very heavy Sunday's work. At Liverpool his presence created quite as great a sensation as at Manchester. Wigan is no longer "wicked Wigan," as it was "for many years proverbially called": the "inhabitants in general have taken a softer mould," and the old missionary is surrounded with marks of love and respect. The society at Bolton, one of the loveliest in England, "by patient continuance in well-doing, have turned scorn and hatred into general esteem and good-will."[1]

A note is here inserted in the printed copies of the *Journal*, stating that "part of the manuscript having been lost causes a chasm here." This chasm extends from 10th April to 24th May. An interesting part of his labours during this period we can fortunately supply from another source. On leaving Bolton he proceeded into Yorkshire. He spent 21st April at Halifax; and, in connection with his visit here, preached at Bradshaw on a Monday morning. The announcement having been made at Halifax the day preceding, a congregation more than sufficient to fill the chapel assembled at the hour of ten. But, owing to his increasing infirmities, Wesley was unable to reach the chapel till one o'clock, during which interval the congregation remained in the chapel with the greatest possible patience. When he arrived the scene was truly affecting. As the venerable saint, accompanied by Bradford and Thompson, ascended the pulpit stairs, the congregation, fully sensible that they were looking on one they should see no more in the flesh, burst into tears. Wesley himself was affected; and the feelings of every one were afresh excited when they beheld him who had been "mighty in words" now requiring the aid of a friend to whisper in his ear the heads of his discourse. Such were his infirmities that

[1] *Journal*, 10th April 1790.

he was obliged to be supported by the two ministers in the pulpit, and more than once his memory entirely failed him, so that their help was necessary to enable him to continue his discourse.[1]

Having traversed the northern counties, Wesley reached Scotland, where he preached in all the principal towns visited by his preachers. He was generally very well received, and fully delivered his soul, employing his remaining strength in faithfully declaring the way of salvation to a people in whom religion seemed almost natural, but whose piety appeared to him as wanting in depth. At Glasgow, by way of exception, "the congregation was miserably small, verifying what I had often heard before, that the Scots dearly love the Word of the Lord . . . on the Lord's day. If I live to come again, I will take care to spend only the Lord's day at Glasgow."[2] More than once he exceeded the limits of his strength: at Brechin, for instance, he "was so faint and ill" that he "had to shorten his discourse." The *Journal* proves that, even at this advanced age, he was alive to the beauties of Scotch scenery, and to the grandeur of its mountains.

On his homeward journey he spent a few days in Newcastle, at the Orphan House founded by him, and his favourite retreat. "In this, and Kingswood House," he says, "were I to do my own will, I should choose to spend the short remainder of my days. But it cannot be; this is not my rest."[3] In this town, the theatre of such activity and such sufferings in former times, he was received with profound veneration: he preached several times, not only to adults but to children, and his sermons and visits produced a deep impression upon

[1] Walker's *Methodism in Halifax*, p. 181. Smith's *History of Methodism*, vol. i. p. 568.

[2] Wesley's *Journal*, 28th May 1790.

[3] *Ibid.*, 4th June 1790.

the minds of the people, the proof of which may be seen in the following account, preserved to us by one of his own preachers. "He appears very feeble," says Charles Atmore, "and no wonder, he being nearly eighty-eight years of age. His sight has failed so much that he cannot see to give out the hymn; yet his voice is strong, and his spirits remarkably lively. Surely this great and good man is the prodigy of the present age.

"*Saturday, May 8th.* — Mr. Wesley accompanied a small party of us to North Shields, where he preached at noon an excellent sermon from Philippians iii. 7. It was indeed a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

"*Lord's day.*—Mr. W. Thompson occupied the pulpit this morning at nine o'clock, and preached from 'Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.' At 2 p.m. Mr. Wesley went to Byker, and addressed several thousands of people in the open air, from Matthew vii. 24, and at 5 p.m. at the Orphan House, from Ephesians ii. 8. The house was much crowded; many hundreds returned, not being able to obtain an entrance.

"Mr. Wesley was highly honoured in his ministry at Newcastle, particularly to one who had been in a state of great despair for many years. As soon as he arrived at the Orphan House, Mr. Wesley enquired after this individual, and I accompanied him in visiting him. As soon as he entered the room he went up to him, and, as a messenger from God, said, 'Brother Reed, I have a word from God unto thee: Jesus Christ maketh thee whole!' He then knelt down to pray, and such a season I have seldom experienced. Hope instantly sprang up, and despair gave place; and, although he had not been out of his habitation, nor even from his wretched bed, for several years, he went that evening to

hear Mr. Wesley preach, while God graciously confirmed the testimony of His servant in restoring him to the light of His countenance."[1]

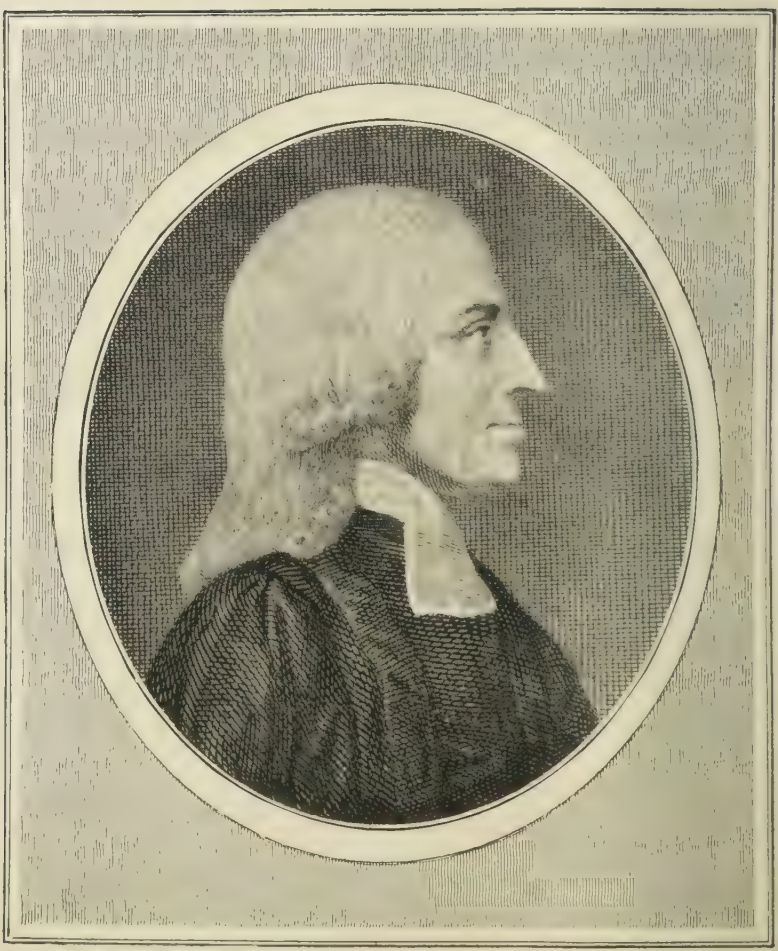
Returning southwards, Wesley spent an evening at Weardale, where he observes: "The same spirit was still in the congregation that has been for many years."[2] At Stanhope, and again at Durham, he was obliged to preach in the open air. At Monkwearmouth, as elsewhere, he admires and encourages the formation of a Sunday school, "which has already cleared the streets of all the children that used to play there on a Sunday from morning to evening."[3] At Whitby he makes the following note: "It was very providential that part of the adjoining mountain fell down and demolished our old preaching house, with many houses besides; by which means we have one of the most beautiful chapels in Great Britain, finely situated on the steep side of the mountain." This new chapel was too small, however, to contain the people; and their spirit is manifest from the following remark: "In all England I have not seen a more affectionate people than those at Whitby."[4]

On the 28th of June he is at Hull, and writes in his *Journal*: "This day I enter into my eighty-eighth year. For above eighty-six years I found none of the infirmities of old age; my eyes did not wax dim, neither was my natural strength abated; but last August I found almost a sudden change. My eyes were so dim that no glasses could help me. My strength likewise now quite forsook me, and probably will not return in this world. But I feel no pain, from head to foot, only it

[1] *Memoirs of the Rev. Charles Atmore*, by the Rev. J. S. Stamp (*Wesleyan Magazine*, 1845, p. 120).

[2] *Journal*, 10th June 1790. [3] *Ibid*, 13th June 1790.

[4] *Ibid.*, 18th June 1790.



JOHN WESLEY.
(*From the European Magazine.*)

seems nature is exhausted, and, humanly speaking, will sink more and more till—

> The weary springs of life stand still at last."

On Saturday, July 3rd, he reached Epworth, the place of his nativity, and, "after preaching in the evening, met the society, and reminded them of what they were some years ago and what they are now; scarce retaining the shadow of their former zeal and activity in all the ways of God." On the following day, at the close of the church service, "he began in the market-place to press that awful question, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' on such a congregation as was never seen at Epworth before."[1]

This last tour terminated at Bristol, where he arrived in August 1790, in time to preside over the forty-seventh Annual Conference. The delightful impressions produced upon his mind by his visits to the principal societies were renewed by the tidings of spiritual progress which were brought by the preachers from all quarters. The work was everywhere in full prosperity. A large number of Wesley's preachers attended the Bristol Conference, and all carried away with them the conviction that they should see his face no more.

After Conference, Wesley still found courage to spend three weeks in Wales: he then returned to Bristol and its neighbourhood, where he passed the month of September in preaching and visiting the societies. On the 27th of August, at Bristol, he held a watch-night, and in his sermon laboured to counteract the influence of a book from which some of the members had learned the doctrine that the sufferings of this

[1] *Journal*, 4th July 1790.

present life have an expiatory value. A few days later, "being the first day of the fair," he spoke strongly from the words of Solomon, "Buy the truth, and sell it not."[1] On another occasion he conducted a three hours' service, including the prayers, sermon, and the Lord's Supper, without any assistance, and still was able to preach in the open air in the afternoon of the same day.[2]

On the 2nd of October, Wesley reached London, after a journey which had lasted in all seven months. Several of his friends went to meet him twenty miles from London, and "he arrived," says Rogers, "in good health and spirits. About six in the evening we reached London, where we praised the Lord with joyful hearts."[3]

The day after, he preached twice in City Road Chapel, and also presided at a love-feast. Two days later we find him preaching at Rye, and on the morrow at Winchelsea, under a large tree, from that text, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand; repent, and believe the gospel." This was on the 7th October 1790. He preached for the last time in the open air, and took leave of the battlefield where, for more than half a century, he had gained so many victories.

Returning back to London for Sunday, the 9th, he started the next day for Colchester, where he "had a wonderful congregation, rich and poor, clergy and laity." Thence he went to Norwich, where, he says, "the tide is wonderfully turned. I am become an honourable man at Norwich." Thence he passed to Yarmouth, where he had a very large congregation: after the service he led a prayer-meeting, "where the power of God fell upon us," he writes. Four days later he reached Lynn, "thoroughly chilled from head to foot from the wind

[1] *Journal*, 1st September 1790. [2] *Ibid.*, 29th August 1790.
[3] *Life of James Rogers*, p. 44.

with mizzling rain" having beaten him in the face along the road. "But I soon forgot this little inconvenience; for which the earnestness of the congregation made me large amends. In the evening (of the 19th) all the clergymen in the town, except one who was lame, were present at the preaching."

Returning to London, he preached twice in one day in the pulpits of the Established Church, and writes as follows: "*Sunday, 24th.*—I explained, to a numerous congregation in Spitalfields Church, 'the whole armour of God.' St. Paul's, Shadwell, was still more crowded in the afternoon, while I enforced that important truth, 'One thing is needful'; and I hope many, even then, resolved to choose the better part."

This simple memorandum is the conclusion of Wesley's *Journal*: here his faltering hand dropped the pen.

"His journals," says an American historian, "containing the most extraordinary record of a human life in the possession of mankind, end on Sunday, the 24th of October 1790, with a notice of his preaching one entire Sabbath in the pulpits of the Establishment, of which he was at once the greatest honour and the greatest victim of the last century."[1]

About the middle of 1790 failing sight compelled him to cease recording his receipts and expenditures in his cash-book. Its last sentence is striking, both by its sentiment and its appearance. "For upwards of eighty-six years I have kept my accounts exactly: I will not attempt it any longer, being satisfied with the continual conviction that I save all I can, and give all I can; that is, all I have." It is scarcely legible, showing how his sight was failing, and how his hand shook in writing; and the error in the number of years is a proof of the decline of his faculties.

[1] Stevens, *History of Methodism*, etc., vol. ii. p. 368.

Though the record of his labour ends, the labours themselves still go on for some months. He continues to preach in his chapels in London and the neighbourhood, although his weakness increases, usually meeting the society after the sermon, giving them his farewell counsel to "love as brethren, fear God, and honour the king," and then singing with them his accustomed parting hymn.

We here register the valued testimony of James Rogers, one of Wesley's preachers, who, with his holy wife, Hester Ann Rogers, lived near Wesley, in the preachers' house, during the last months of his life.

"His preaching, during the whole winter, was attended with common unction; and he frequently spoke, both in his sermons and exhortations, as if each time were to be his last; and often desired the people to receive what he advanced as his dying charge. This conversation also, in his family, seemed to indicate a presentiment of death. He frequently spoke of the state of separate spirits, and their particular employments; and, for the last three months of his life, there were scarcely three evenings passed together but he gave out and sung, in the family, the hymn beginning with the line, 'Shrinking from the cold hand of death.'"[1]

The letters written by Wesley to his preachers and to his friends during the last months of his life show that he retained to the end his wonderful intellectual activity, and that he continued till his death to be the leader of his societies. His letters to his fellow-workers are specially interesting: he addresses them by their most familiar names, and writes to them with the simplicity and tenderness of a father. He takes a lively interest in everything concerning them: their health, their families, their work. He repeatedly exhorts

[1] *Life of Rogers*, p. 44.

them to be devoted and zealous. He writes to one: "If we do not take care we shall all degenerate into milk-sops. 'Soldiers of Christ arise!'"[1] To another he writes: "Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen, such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven upon earth."[2] He also urges upon those preachers the duty of working for the children and the Sunday schools, of resisting the inroads of spiritual decline and false enthusiasm in the societies: he presses them to cultivate their minds more and more, and to preach holiness; "this doctrine is the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodists."[3] Wesley also rejoices with them in their successes, and feels with them in their difficulties. He still follows their work in all its details, and takes in at a glance the great field in which his brave workers were scattered far and near. To a missionary in Nova Scotia he writes to enquire about the development of Methodism in that distant country. A month before his death he addressed to a preacher in the United States a touching letter, in which he expresses the hope that the Methodists in America will never entertain the idea of separating from their European brethren. "Lose no opportunity," he adds, "of declaring to all men that the Methodists are one people in all the world, and that it is their full determination to continue—

> Though mountains rise, and oceans roll,
> To sever us in vain."[4]

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[1] Tyerman, *Life of Wesley*, vol. iii. p. 601.
[2] Sigston, *Memoir of Mr. W. Bramwell*, p. 494.
[3] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xiii. p. 9. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 127.

The letters addressed to women by Wesley are marked with delicacy of feeling and of expression, which always distinguished him in his intercourse with them. Thus he gives advice to the wife of one of his preachers, touching her husband's health. To a Christian young woman, whose rather superabundant activity seemed to be in the way of the preacher of the place, he administers prudential advice as well as encouragement. In other letters to women he touches upon matters relating to religious experience.

We must here add that in these letters, as well as in his sermons published in the *Arminian Magazine* of 1790 and 1791, Wesley betrays a constant preoccupation of the actual and of the future state of his societies. He speaks with great seriousness of their decline. He cannot be reconciled to their neglecting fasting and five o'clock (morning) preaching. He protests against the encroachments of luxury and worldliness. He accuses some of the Methodists as having remembered only the two first of the maxims he laid down for them long ago, and as having forgotten the third and last one. These rules were—(1) Gain all you can; (2) save all you can; (3) give all you can.[1]

Although the venerable man spoke thus frankly and severely, we must not suppose that he had lost sight of the greatness of the work connected with his name. He speaks of it without any show of pride, but with deep gratitude to God. To a preacher in Nova Scotia he writes as follows: "Never was there so great a thirst for the pure word of God as there is at this day. I have just now finished my route through Scotland,

[1] Two of Wesley's last sermons were on that subject. One of the two, *On Worldly Folly*, was written at Balham on 19th February 1790; the other, *On the Danger of Increasing Riches!* at Bristol, 21st September 1790.

where I never had such congregations before. So it pleases God to give me a little more to do before He calls me hence."[1]

It seemed as though the valiant old man was to "die standing," as a Roman emperor said of himself; for, almost to his last day, he pursued his life's work. On Thursday, the 17th of February 1791, he preached at Lambeth, which was at that time a hamlet in the suburbs of London. On returning home he complained of having taken cold; but it did not prevent his spending the day following in his study, reading and writing, and his preaching in the evening at Chelsea from that striking text, "The King's business required haste" (1 Sam. xxi. 8). But such was his weakness that, more than once, he was obliged to stop speaking in order to take a little rest.

On the Saturday he attended to his usual engagements. In spite of his great physical decline, he was preparing to undertake another extensive journey, and on that day he wrote the following letter to Mrs. Susan Knapp, of Worcester:—

"My dear Suky,—As the state of my health is exceeding wavering, and waxes worse, I cannot yet lay down any plans for my future journeys. Indeed, I propose, if God permit, to set out for Bristol on the 28th instant; but how much farther I shall be able to go I cannot yet determine. If I am pretty well, I hope to be at Worcester about the 22nd of March. To find you and yours in health of body and mind will be a great pleasure to me."[2]

He also went, the same day, to dine with one of his friends at Islington, and there he desired somebody to

[1] *Memoirs of Black*, p. 265.
[2] Tyerman, *Life of Wesley*, vol. iii. p. 649.

read to him four chapters from the Book of Job (chapters iv. to vii. inclusive), a most suitable selection for a man who was so near death.

On the Sunday he rose at four in the morning, as the uniform habit of his life had been. But his strength was not equal to his courage, and he had to give up the idea of preaching.

During the following days Wesley appeared to revive, and he was able to pay a few visits. On the Tuesday night he preached at City Road, and on the morrow he was well enough to travel to Leatherhead, a distance of eighteen miles from London, where he preached from this text, which might be taken as a summary of his whole ministry, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near" (Isa. lv. 6). This was on Wednesday, 23rd February 1791, just a week before he died; and it was Wesley's last discourse. "On that day," says the historian whom we have frequently quoted before, "fell from his dying grasp a trumpet of the truth which had sounded the everlasting gospel oftener and more effectually than that of any other man for sixteen hundred years."[1]

The day after, Wesley spent a few hours at his old friend's, Mr. Wolff, of Balham, and was cheerful and full of animation. On that day he wrote his last letter. It was addressed to Wilberforce, and was an exhortation to perseverance in his labours against the African slave-trade. Most fitting it was that the final page penned by the eighteenth century reformer should be a protest against the most monstrous of iniquities in modern times, and a word of encouragement to the champion of the poor slaves.

We subjoin this letter, which Wesley wrote, as it

[1] Stevens, *History of Methodism*, etc., vol. ii. p. 369.

were, on the brink of the grave, and which must have greatly cheered the heart of Wilberforce:—

"LONDON, *February 26th*, 1791.

"DEAR SIR,—Unless the divine power has raised you up to be as *Athanasius contra mundum*,[1] I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that execrable villainy, which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But 'if God be for you, who can be against you'? Are all of them together stronger than God? Oh, 'be not weary in well doing!' Go on, in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.

"Reading this morning a tract, wrote by a poor African, I was particularly struck by that circumstance, that a man who has a black skin, being wronged or outraged by a white man, can have no redress; it being a law in all our colonies, that the oath of a black against a white goes for nothing. What villainy is this!

"That He who has guided you from your youth up may continue to strengthen you in this and all things is the prayer of, Dear Sir, Your affectionate servant,

"JOHN WESLEY."[2]

The closing scenes of Wesley's life are thus described by Miss Ritchie as quoted by Joseph Benson.

[1] "Athanasius against the world."

[2] Wilberforce's *Life*, vol. i. p. 297. Moore's *Life of Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 437. This last author dates the letter 26th February; but evidently on that day Wesley was already too weak to write a letter, and it seems most probable that this last one was penned on the 24th.

"Sunday morning (27th February), he seemed much better, got up and took a cup of tea. Sitting in his chair, he looked quite cheerful, and repeated the latter part of the verse, in his brother Charles's Scripture Hymns, on 'Forsake me not when my strength faileth,' namely—

'Till glad I lay this body down,
Thy servant, Lord, attend;
And, oh! my life of mercy crown
With a triumphant end.'

Soon after, in a most emphatical manner, he said, 'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth.' Exerting himself to converse with some friends, he was soon fatigued, and obliged to lie down. After lying quiet some time, he looked up and said, 'Speak to me; I cannot speak.' On which one of the company said, 'Shall we pray with you, sir?' He earnestly replied, 'Yes.' And while they prayed, his whole soul seemed engaged with God for an answer, and his hearty Amen showed that he perfectly understood what was said. About half an hour after he said, 'There is no need of more: when at Bristol my words were—

"I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."'[1]

"One said, 'Is this the present language of your heart? And do you now feel as you did then?' He replied, 'Yes.' When the same person repeated—

'Bold I approach th' eternal throne,
And claim the crown through Christ my own';

and added, ''Tis enough; He, our precious Emmanuel, has purchased, has promised all'; he earnestly replied, 'He is all! He is all!' After this the fever was very

[1] At the Bristol Conference in 1788, Mr. Wesley was taken very ill: neither he nor his friends thought he could recover.

high, and at times affected his recollection; but even then, though his head was subject to a temporary derangement, his heart seemed wholly engaged in his Master's work. In the evening he got up again, and, while sitting in his chair, he said, 'How necessary it is for everyone to be on the right foundation!—

> "I the chief of sinners am,
> But Jesus died for me."'

"Monday 28th, his weakness increased. He slept most of the day, and spoke but little; yet that little testified how much his whole heart was taken up in the care of the societies, the glory of God, and the promotion of the things pertaining to that kingdom to which he was hastening. Once he said, in a low but distinct manner, 'There is no way into the holiest but by the blood of Jesus.' He afterwards enquired what the words were from which he had preached a little before at Hampstead. Being told they were these, 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich'; he replied, 'That is the foundation, the only foundation: there is no other.' This day Dr. Whitehead desired he might be asked if he would have any other physician called in to attend him; but this he absolutely refused. It is remarkable that he suffered very little pain, never complaining of any during his illness, but once of a pain in his left breast. This was a restless night.

"Tuesday morning: he sang two verses of a hymn: then, lying still, as if to recover strength, he called for pen and ink; but when they were brought, he could not write. A person said, 'Let me write for you, sir: tell me what you would say.' He replied, 'Nothing, but that God is with us.'"

[Towards the evening he seemed to gather up his strength in order to say a few words, but he could just murmur, "Nature is—Nature is—" One that was present added, "Nearly exhausted, but you are entering into a new nature, and into the society of blessed spirits." He answered, "Certainly"; and clasped his hands together, saying "Jesus!"—the rest could not be well heard, but his lips continued moving as in fervent prayer.[1]]

"In the forenoon he said, 'I will get up.' While they were preparing his clothes, he broke out in a manner which, considering his extreme weakness, astonished all present, in singing—

'I'll praise my Maker while I've breath;
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers:
My days of praise shall ne'er be past
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures.'

"Having got him into his chair, they observed him change for death. But he, regardless of his dying body, said, with a weak voice, 'Lord, Thou givest strength to those that can speak, and to those who cannot. Speak, Lord, to all our hearts, and let them know that Thou loosest tongues.' He then sung—

'To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;
Who sweetly all agree,'—

Here his voice failed. After gasping for breath, he said, 'Now we have done all.' He was then laid in the bed from which he rose no more. After resting a little, he called to those who were with him to 'pray and praise.' They kneeled down, and the room seemed to be

[1] From Moore's *Life of Wesley*. The descriptions of the closing scenes found in various Lives are taken from a document drawn up by Miss Ritchie.

filled with the Divine presence. A little after, he said, 'Let me be buried in nothing but what is woollen, and let my corpse be carried into the chapel.' Then, as if he had done with all below, he again begged they would pray and praise. Several friends that were in the house being called up, they all kneeled down again to prayer, at which time his fervour of spirit was manifest to everyone present. But, in particular parts of the prayer, his whole soul seemed to be engaged in a manner which evidently showed how ardently he longed for the full accomplishment of their united desires. And when one of the preachers was praying in a very expressive manner, that if God were about to take away their father to his eternal rest, He would be pleased to continue and increase His blessing upon the doctrine and discipline which He had long made His servant the means of propagating and establishing in the world, such a degree of fervour accompanied his loud 'Amen' as was every way expressive of his soul's being engaged in the answer of the petitions. On rising from their knees, he took hold of all their hands, and, with the utmost placidness, saluted them and said, 'Farewell, farewell.'

"A little after, a person coming in, he strove to speak, but could not. Finding they could not understand him, he paused a little, and then, with all the remaining strength he had, cried out, 'The best of all is, God is with us'; and soon after, lifting up his dying arm in token of victory, and raising his feeble voice with a holy triumph not to be expressed, he again repeated the heart-reviving words, 'The best of all is, God is with us.' Being told that his brother's widow was come, he said, 'He giveth His servants rest.' He thanked her as she pressed his hand, and affectionately endeavoured to kiss her. On his lips being wetted he said, 'We thank Thee, O Lord,

for these and all Thy mercies: bless the Church and king, and grant us truth and peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord, for ever and ever!' At another time he said, 'He causeth His servants to lie down in peace.' Then, pausing a little, he cried, 'The clouds drop fatness!' and soon after, 'The Lord is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge.' He then called those present to prayer, and, though he was greatly exhausted, he appeared still more fervent in spirit. These exertions were, however, too much for his feeble frame; and most of the night following, though he often attempted to repeat the psalm before mentioned, he could only utter, 'I'll praise. I'll praise!'

"On Wednesday morning the closing scene drew near. Mr. Bradford, his faithful friend, prayed with him, and the last word he was heard to articulate was 'Farewell.' A few minutes before ten, while several of his friends were kneeling around his bed, without a lingering groan, this man of God, this beloved pastor of thousands, entered into the joy of his Lord."

His death took place on the 2nd of March 1791, at a little before ten in the morning. Wesley was then in his eighty-eighth year.

Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers, who was present throughout the last scene, writes: "The solemnity of the dying hour of that great and good man, I believe will ever be written on my heart. A cloud of the Divine presence rested on all; and while he could hardly be said to be an inhabitant of earth, being now speechless and his eyes fixed, victory and glory were written on his countenance, and quivering as it were, on his dying lips. No language can paint what appeared in that face! The more we gazed upon it, the more we saw of heaven unspeakable."

As soon as Wesley had breathed his last his friends, standing around his mortal remains, sang a hymn of

praise: then they kneeled, and prayed that the mantle of Elijah might fall on the shoulders of those whom he left behind.

The day before his burial, the corpse was laid at the entrance of City Road Chapel, and it was reckoned that about ten thousand people passed near it, eager to behold for the last time that face which Death had stamped with its solemn seal, but could not rob of its peaceful expression. In order to prevent accidents from the crowd, Wesley's friends decided to inter him early in the morning, between five and six. Several hundreds of people, however, attended the funeral.

The minister who was called upon to preside at the ceremony was John Richardson, who for thirty years had been connected with Wesley. When he came to that part of the Liturgy where it is said, "For as much as it hath pleased Almighty God of His great mercy to take unto Himself the soul of our dear brother," he substituted the word *father*, and the people were so deeply affected that from silent tears they broke out into loud weeping for the venerable man who had been a father to them, and their sobs drowned the voice of the officiating minister.

Wesley's remains were deposited in a vault which he had had prepared in the graveyard adjoining City Road Chapel. There they repose, awaiting the resurrection of the just, and surrounded by the tombs of many other Methodist preachers.

By his will Wesley left, as a legacy to his societies, all profits arising from the sale of his writings, on condition that a life-annuity of £80 should be paid to his brother's widow. His manuscripts were to be remitted to his three executors, Dr. Coke, Dr. Whitehead, and Henry Moore.

CHAPTER VI

WESLEY'S CHARACTER

WESLEY'S character can be fully understood only if we take his piety into proper account. He was a great reformer because a great Christian. The kind of Christianity he revived was experimental Christianity, the religion which makes man happy and strong, by controlling his soul and life. He lived the truths which he preached. He was an earnest Christian, a saint in the evangelical meaning of the word; and it is that distinguishing feature of his personal life which explains the special character of his work, a work the essence of which was to bring souls to God, and then unite them together, not as Churches which would rival older ones, but as societies for mutual edification, as schools of piety, *collegia pietatis*.

This characteristic feature of Wesley's work has been taken notice of by Charles de Rémusat, in his Essay on Wesley's Life and on Methodism, which he wrote on our issuing the first edition of this book.[1] "John Wesley," says he, "was certainly one of the most accomplished patterns of holiness in active life, that is to say, of the truest holiness, that which constitutes the highest religious type of humanity. But we prefer

[1] *John Wesley and Methodism*, an article in the *Revue des Deux-Mondes* of 15th January 1870. That essay has been reprinted in a separate form. Paris, 1870.

admiring in him the natural man, rather than the man as modified by grace. We thus find in him a combination of great qualities, such as we must, to find the like, go back to apostolical times. Luther had more genius, more imagination, more daring, in a word, more of the gifts which conquer the hearts of men; but he was not so pure, nor so simple, nor so devoted, in fact, not so blameless. The immortal pattern of such men as Luther and Wesley was Paul of Tarsus, so superior to all others, rising far above great men; but who can tell whether his all-powerful energy and vehement activity would not have been improved by an admixture of the mild and patient temper of his humble followers?"

The eminent academician we have been quoting declares, in terms which may seem almost too strong even to those who most admire Wesley, that his greatness belonged to that "degree of holiness and love" which Pascal ranked above all other degrees of greatness. He had, as Matthew Arnold has said, "a genius for godliness."[1] And truly, his piety was the focus and centre of his whole life and character. The religious crisis which marked the years of his austere youth not only altered the course of his personal convictions, but also transformed his soul and his career. When that crisis was over, the result was for Wesley something more than merely recovering the great truth of salvation by faith: he had been learning a new way of living and working.

This impulse, received at the beginning of his career, was continually renewed by the most genuine and living piety. The manifold duties and incessant labours of his everyday life did not absorb or even diminish that hidden spring of life and zeal. Years passed on without altering the sweet fragrance of Wesley's piety. Prayer had a considerable place in his inward life. "The secret

[1] *Wesley Memorial Volume*, p. 672. New York, 1880.

of his self-control," says Dr. Punshon, "as of the marvellous power of his ministry, was in the morning hour, which, for many years, he was accustomed to spend in the closet. If in Luther's prayers was the mystery of the Reformation, in Wesley's prayers may be found one explanation of the great Revival." [1]

It was the depth of Wesley's piety which imprinted on his character and life a stamp of real unity.

"I have thought," said he, "I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God: just hovering over the great gulf till, a few moments hence, I am no more seen, I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing,—the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God Himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end He came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. Oh, give me that book! At any price give me the book of God! I have it; here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*." [2]

Wesley was truly a man of one book and one idea. His book was the Bible; his idea, the salvation of sinners. He applied all the powers of his soul, and all the energies of his life, to the fulfilment of that one idea. It was for this that he was willing to renounce the pleasure of intellectual pursuits, and weaned his loving heart; for this also that he sacrificed reputation and the peace of his life.

His intense love for God and for men can alone explain the self-denying and self-sacrificing spirit of which Wesley is such a perfect pattern. Very few men

[1] *Wesley and his Times.* Lectures and Sermons, by W. M. Punshon (American Edition), p. 181.

[2] "A man of one book." Wesley's *Works*, vol. v. p. 3. Preface to the Sermons.

have been despised, derided, and calumniated as he was. For many years he had to encounter the wild anger of mobs, the ill-will of magistrates, the jealousy and hatred of the clergy, the scorn of the upper classes, and, that which was not the least painful of all, the opposition of many sincere Christians. And yet he was not a Stoic, either by temperament or by principle. But he could suffer, because he could love. He stood firm in the midst of himself and false imputations, because he had a good conscience and God's approbation.

Wesley's courage may be likened to that which fires the soldier's heart at the hour of battle, or when assailing a strong place. This we have noticed many times as we retraced his career; but we should add here, that, with such heroic courage, he nevertheless remained the Christian who could forgive those who insulted him, bless those who cursed him, and pray for those who persecuted him. Not only was he brave enough to affront the mobs and to disarm them by his firm behaviour and resolute words, but he could conquer by patience and long-suffering such people as would not have yielded to his intrepid courage.

Among Wesley's most characteristic qualities, we must notice his extraordinary capacity for work. It would be difficult to instance such another busy life. It has been calculated that, in the course of his fifty years' ministry, Wesley travelled nearly two hundred and fifty thousand miles, and preached forty thousand sermons. If we add to this enormous amount of labour that which was entailed upon him by his extensive correspondence, his numerous pastoral visitations, the publication of two hundred books written or abridged by him, and the administration of the manifold business connected with societies which reckoned, at the time of his death, more than seventy thousand members in Great Britain alone,

we shall be compelled to wonder how he could find time for everything.

If we would complete this picture of his activity, we must take in many other things. This busy man could find time to read over his classics frequently, to enjoy a fine view or to visit some remarkable monument; even, now and then, for listening to one of Handel's or Haydn's Oratorios. He took an interest in public affairs, and cultivated an intercourse with distinguished men like Howard, Samuel Johnson, and others. Whatever he did he invariably did well; for he combined a real talent for great designs with the capacity to watch them executed down to the smallest details. Nothing escaped his notice; for he knew how important even small things are.

He bore with ease the weight of many and varied affairs, the bare enumeration of which seems to bewilder one. And he declared that ten thousand cares weighed no more on his mind than did as many hairs upon his head. All contemporary witnesses agree in representing him as endowed with so serene a disposition that it seemed to spread around to those who came near him. Here is the testimony given by Alexander Knox, a very distinguished man, who for twenty years was a friend of Wesley's, although he never ranked as one of his followers: "His countenance, as well as conversation, expressed an habitual gaiety of heart, which nothing but conscious virtue and innocence could have bestowed. He was, in truth, the most perfect specimen of moral happiness which I ever saw; and my acquaintance with him has done more to teach me what a heaven upon earth is implied in the maturity of Christian piety than all I have elsewhere seen, or heard, or read, except in the sacred volume." [1]

[1] *Remarks on the Life and Character of John Wesley*, printed as sequel to the *Life of Wesley*, by Southey, vol. ii. p. 299.

It was by improving time carefully that Wesley was able to accomplish so much work. One day, having had to wait for his carriage, he was heard to say in an earnest tone, "I have lost ten minutes for ever!" A friend once said to him, "You have no need to be in a hurry." "Hurry," he replied; "I have no time to be in a hurry."[1]

He always rose before daylight, and much of his work was already done when most men only begin their daily task. He saved minutes more zealously than others do hours: time was to him more precious than gold is to a miser. By laying out his time methodically, he managed to get everything into its proper place, and he could always usefully employ any interval of unforeseen leisure. Having, one day in Wales, been stopped by a high tide which flooded the shore where he had to pass, he at once set to improving his time. "I sat down in a little cottage for three or four hours, and translated Aldrich's *Logic*."[2]

As Wesley saved his time, so he saved his money, but it was on behalf of the poor and not for himself. When he consented to receive a salary from the London societies, he himself limited it to the modest sum of £30. It is true that he had, besides that, what the sale of his books produced, and it was sometimes a good deal.[3] But when he had deducted from his income enough to supply his wants, which were moderate, all that remained he gave away. His friend Dr. Whitehead,

[1] Tyerman, vol. iii. p. 658. [2] Wesley's *Works*, vol. ii. p. 179.

[3] In 1780 he wrote: "Two-and-forty years ago, having a desire to furnish poor people with cheaper, shorter, and plainer books than any I had seen, I wrote many small tracts, generally a penny a-piece; and afterwards several larger. Some of these had such a sale as I never thought of; and, by this means, I unawares became rich. But I never desired or endeavoured after it. And now that it is come upon me unawares, I lay up no treasures upon earth: I lay up nothing at all.

who saw all his accounts, calculated that he had thus given away, in the course of fifty years, no less than £20,000 to £30,000. Another of his friends, Henry Moore, considered this valuation to be below the truth. According to Bradburn, he sometimes gave in alms as much as £1400 in a year. His way of living was so simple that when asked by the Commissioners of Excise what plate he had which ought to be taxed, he answered :—

"Sir,—I have two silver teaspoons here in London, and two at Bristol. This is all the plate which I have at present, and I shall not buy any more while so many round me want bread.—I am, Sir, your most humble servant,

"John Wesley."[1]

Wesley died poor, as he promised his friends, leaving only, as has been quaintly said, "a good library of books, a well-worn clergyman's gown, a much-abused reputation, and—the Methodist Church."

Wesley's piety was neither narrow nor intolerant. If it sometimes happens, in the course of a polemical discussion, that he is carried away by the ardour of the combat, he fully redeems such momentary failings by the largeness of his ideas and the catholic sentiments of his whole life. His friendship with Whitefield continued, as we have seen, unbroken by the doctrinal controversies which arose between them. His sermon "On a Catholic Spirit" shows that he was worthy to rank among the forerunners of the Evangelical Alliance. His heart was

My desire and endeavour, in this respect, is to 'wind my bottom round the year.' I cannot help leaving my books behind me whenever God calls me hence; but in every other respect, my own hands will be my executors."—*Works*, vol. viii. p. 9. We must add, that he kept this promise faithfully.

[1] Telford, *Wesley Anecdotes*, p. 138.

so large that he could not confine his sympathies within the limits of sect or party. Wherever he recognised the true spirit of Christianity he did homage to it, however it might be alloyed by the admixture of error and infirmity. His liberality was so great that he edited, for the use of his societies, several works whose authors belonged to the Romish communion. He published also, in the pages of the Magazine and elsewhere, biographical notices of eminent Catholic saints, such as Madame Guyon, the Marquis de Renty, the Spaniard Gregory Lopez, and others. He also published a *Life of Thomas Firmin*, a Unitarian, whose piety he sincerely admired, without ignoring his errors of belief. Wesley went so far as to say of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius: "I make no doubt but this is one of those 'many' who 'shall come from the east and the west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.'"[1] This catholicity of spirit was often misunderstood by many sincere Christians, but it was one of those points on which he laid the greatest stress. The only limit he placed to freedom of thought among his societies was the respect due to the opinions of others. His sentiments on this head he explains in the following manner: "I have no more right to object to a man because he holds an opinion different from mine, than I have a right to separate from a man because he wears a wig while I wear none. But if he happen to take off his wig and shake the powder in my eyes, I shall consider it my duty to run away from him as soon as possible."

Wesley's piety, though fervid and intent upon holiness, was free from bigotry; and, although methodical and subject to rule, it stood as far from formalistic and perfunctory practices as from sad ascetic principles. Outwardly, this piety manifested itself in such perfect

[1] Wesley's *Journal*, 11th October 1745.

serenity, and with so much cheerfulness, that his society was sought after by men who were as much separated from him by social rank as by their ideas. His conversation, flowing from a many-sided intellectual culture, pleased the most distinguished men; Dr. Samuel Johnson, after enjoying his company for two hours, said to Mrs. Hall, Wesley's sister, "I could talk all day, and all night too, with your brother."[1] But he was not less at home with the poor country people, among whom he was a frequent guest, forgetting himself, and enabling them to forget the difference in their education.

Wesley was not only cheerful, but at times full of humour and anecdotes. Alexander Knox speaks of his "sportive sallies of innocent mirth, which delighted the young and thoughtless." The devout Thomas Walsh, whose temper was morbidly scrupulous, once said to him: "Among the three or four persons that tempted me to levity, you, sir, are one by your witty proverbs." Many instances of Wesley's witty humour might be quoted. Curious examples of it are to be found in his journals, and they give a pleasing impression of his temper. But as Punshon says: "These instances of a wit which ever played across the clear sky of Wesley's life are like summer lightning, having no fork to wound, and only seen in the still evening, when the labours of the day were done."[2]

Wesley's temper was certainly not exempt from imperfections, but they may be considered as the defects

[1] Wesley, having read Johnson's pamphlet on American affairs, expressed his satisfaction to the author, and received from him the following reply: "To have gained such a mind as yours may justly confirm me in my own opinion. What effect my paper has had upon the public, I know not; but I have no reason to be discouraged. The lecturer was surely in the right who, though he saw his audience slinking away, refused to quit the chair while Plato stayed."

[2] *Wesley and his Times.*

of his qualities. With so much liveliness and activity, it is not surprising that he should at times have been irritable and impatient. But he exhibited an edifying humility in the way in which he atoned for those moments of quick temper. His conduct on a certain occasion towards Joseph Bradford, the companion of his travels, has often been related. Wesley directed him to carry a package of letters to the post. Bradford wished to hear his sermon first. Wesley was urgent, and insisted. Bradford refused. "Then," said Wesley, "you and I must part." "Very good, sir," replied Bradford. They slept over it. On rising the next morning, Wesley accosted his old friend and asked if he had considered what he had said, that "they must part." "Yes, sir," replied Bradford. "And must we part?" enquired Wesley. "Please yourself, sir," was the reply. "Will you ask my pardon?" rejoined Wesley. "No, sir." "You won't?" "No, sir." "Then I will ask yours!" replied the great man. Bradford melted under the example, and wept like a child.[1]

Wesley has been taken to task as having been credulous and too fond of marvellous accounts. We cannot deny the charge, and we admit that he listened too willingly to extraordinary and supposed preternatural cases, and that he admitted them to his journals without having always seriously considered them. This weakness, whether of the intellect or of the imagination, seems to have been connected with his firm belief in spiritual things, and in an invisible world. It was like a reaction against the sceptic dispositions of many of his contemporaries, and at the same time a tribute paid to a prevalent infirmity of many of the noblest minds of the age.[2]

[1] Stevens, *History of Methodism*, vol. ii. p. 386.

[2] Samuel Johnson, with all his knowledge, believed in ghosts and apparitions. People were still prosecuted for the crime of witchcraft, and in

Southey, and others after him, have asserted that ambition was one of the ruling motives in Wesley's life.[1] If the word "ambition" is intended to describe a vulgar desire to rise above one's fellow-men, to create a rumour about one's name, or to be a party leader, we may well say that Wesley's whole existence is a complete refutation of that statement.

A rare and strange ambition, truly, which prompts a man to renounce his most favourite tastes and pursuits, as well as his most material interests, and turn field-preacher to the coarsest and most ungovernable rabble that the world ever saw! To expect celebrity from such a fickle-minded mob were as much madness as to write one's name upon the sands swept by the whirlwind in order to transmit it to posterity! If ambition means the loving of power for power's sake, or for the popularity and the advantages flowing from it, it can boldly be asserted that Wesley was not ambitious. But if it means, desiring the power on account of the opportunities it offers to do good and to spread the truth, then we must admit that he had ambition. On that subject John Nichols wrote: "I do not say that he was without ambition: he had that which Christianity need not blush at, and which virtue is proud to confess. I do not mean that which is gratified by splendour and large possessions; but that which commands the hearts and affections, the

Scotland there were, in the course of the eighteenth century, individuals sentenced to be burned as sorcerers.

[1] Although Dr. Southey, in his *Life of Wesley*, ascribes to him ambitious views, we must not fail to remark that he altered his way of thinking after having examined facts more closely. In a letter, which has been reproduced in *fac-simile* by Dr. George Smith in his *History of Methodism*, Southey in a most candid way acknowledges his mistake. "Mr. Alexander Knox has convinced me that I was mistaken in supposing ambition entered largely into Mr. Wesley's actuating impulses." The doctor also declared his intention to alter the text of his book in conformity with his new convictions; but death did not allow him to do so.

homage and gratitude, of thousands."[1] In the true sense of the word, ambition was Wesley's ruling passion; but it was a holy ambition to benefit his fellow-men, ambition arising from love to God.[2]

The great qualifications of Wesley appear nowhere more brightly than in his preaching: speaking was his chief power. After looking at the man, let us study the preacher. The attempt is difficult, for it is evident that his written sermons do not enable us to appreciate his talent as a preacher, being mostly essays on some subject of doctrine or morality, and generally designed to be read rather than spoken.

The great theme of Wesley's discourses was the gospel, the glad tidings of God's grace offered to all repenting and believing sinners. These were the teachings of St. Paul and of the reformers; but they had vanished from the pulpits of the Church of England. When Wesley undertook to restore to its place the gospel doctrine, he would naturally be looked upon as advancing new dogmas, whilst he was, in fact, only attempting to bring back the past. But he is not to be condemned

[1] John Nichols, *Gentleman's Magazine*, March 1791.

[2] Historians of various ecclesiastical shades are now agreed on that point. Dr. Stoughton, the eminent Nonconformist writer, says, in the course of the volume we have often quoted: "The theory that Wesley determined on an ambitious scheme is now exploded" (*Religion in England under Queen Anne*, vol. i. p. 400). Mr. Overton, the distinguished historian of the Church of England in the eighteenth century, also writes: "Posterity has fully acquitted him of the charge of being actuated by a mere vulgar ambition,—of desiring to head a party—of an undue love of power. It has at last owned that if ever a poor, frail, human being was actuated by pure and disinterested motives, that man was John Wesley" (*English Church in the Eighteenth Century*). Mr. Lecky, another author who has described the England of last century, and who is quite free from all ecclesiastical bias, has said: "Nothing can be more unjust than to attribute to Wesley the ambition of a schismatic, or the subversive instincts of a revolutionist" (*England in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. ii. p. 632).

because, when he began to preach what the apostles and reformers had preached, it sounded like a novelty. When he was deprived of official pulpits, he did not alter the theme of his ministrations. Whether at the corner-stone in the public square, or in the poor cottages of peasants, or in humble Methodist chapels, he went on preaching the same truths, the power of which he had personally experienced. It would be a great mistake to fancy that his discourses were only vehement speeches, chiefly consisting of appeals to human feeling. They affected, on the contrary, the character of dogmatic and moral teaching; and the fact that they were so successful redounds to the praise of the English people who not only could bear, but could relish, such strong food.

Wesley's preaching was necessarily extemporised as to its outward form. How could he do otherwise, having had to preach on an average about fifteen times a week for more than half a century? He generally found his text in the Scripture lessons appointed for the day in the Liturgy: such was his custom, especially in the latter part of his life. He prepared for preaching both in the early hours which he spent in private exercises, and in the long rides which he took in order to reach his appointments. It must be borne in mind that he could draw upon an immense reserve of facts and ideas which had accumulated in his memory, and were derived, partly from the thorough training he had received when young, partly from his incessant reading, partly also from his practical acquaintance with men and things At a time when the reading of sermons was the universal rule in England, this sudden introduction of *ex-tempore* preaching was not only a matter of deep astonishment, but almost seemed a revolution; and it is not impossible that such an innovation in the delivery of sermons should have provoked, in part, the

opposition which the Wesleys met at the beginning of their ministry.[1] But this question was all important to the success of the Revival; if the preachers had confined themselves to reading manuscript sermons, the Revival would have remained captive and powerless, as if wrapped in a shroud.

Wesley's attitude in the pulpit has been described by one of his hearers "as graceful and easy; his action, calm and natural, yet pleasing and expressive; his voice, not loud, but clear and manly; his style, neat, simple, perspicuous, and admirably adapted to the capacity of his hearers.[2] Wesley had a perfect abhorrence of mere declamation or sensationalism, and nothing of this kind could be detected in his way of preaching. The words and sentences which he used, if not the most sonorous or harmonious, were always such as best expressed his thoughts, and could, at the same time, be best understood. Walter Scott, who heard him several times in the churchyard at Kelso, in Scotland, whilst he was still a child, had retained a vivid remembrance of those sermons, which, though young, he could follow, and which, he remarks, were interspersed with "many excellent stories," but he adds, that some people found his sermons "too colloquial." [3]

Wesley's discourses were sometimes long. His journals mention instances of sermons that lasted two

[1] In a letter, dated December 1, 1728, to Charles Wesley, but referring also to John, their elder brother Samuel, who was a most zealous High Churchman, protested in violent words against their *ex-tempore* sermons: "There is a most monstrous appearance of dishonesty amongst you: your sermons are generally three-quarters of an hour long in the pulpit, but when printed are short snips, rather notes than sermons." Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley*, vol. i. p. 173.

[2] Hampson's *Life of Wesley*. Quoted in the *Wesley Memorial Volume*, p. 578.

[3] Letter to Southey, dated Abbotsford, 4th April 1791, quoted in Tyerman's *Life of Wesley*, vol. iii. p. 371.

hours, and of meetings protracted to three.[1] All he says about such a case is this, "My heart was so enlarged I knew not how to give over, so that we continued three hours." But these were only exceptional cases; he preached so frequently that he could not afford to be long. Still, whether short or long, his sermons were always interesting. No ordinary speaker could thus have retained the attention of thousands of the common people, in the open air, for one, two, much less three hours at a time.

What gave his preaching so much of originality was its perfect frankness: it may be truly said of Wesley, that he "spoke as one having authority." He never flatters his audience; he knows nothing of the art of disguising his thoughts in order to render them more acceptable. His concise and expressive language aims directly at its object, and says exactly what he means. Many instances have been given of the almost magical effect produced on the minds of the people by his incisive utterance. Still more effectually, perhaps, did he wield this power over individuals. When he fixed his gaze on one of his hearers, it was a very rare thing if the heart did not quail beneath his glance. Sometimes a man would enter his congregation with his hat on his head, fully determined to put him to silence, but his countenance would change and his cheek pale as he encountered the keen eye that seemed to pierce to the depths of his being. We must not, however, suppose that this influence of Wesley upon the masses in any degree resembled haughtiness. His authority was of a purely moral kind, and was attained through the consistency of his character and the holiness of his life.

[1] Wesley's *Journal*, 7th October 1739; 19th October 1739; 13th June 1742; 24th May 1745; 14th May 1749.

It must be added, that in many respects Wesley was admirably qualified for his mission as a popular preacher. Besides that eagle glance and that flowing and flexible voice, he possessed qualities of mind most highly valued by the people, namely, clearness and precision. None knew better than he did how to familiarise the loftiest truths to the lowliest minds. None knew better how to employ a sprightly repartee or a happy expression, so that when a long harangue would have failed in its object, the "witty proverb" penetrated like the point of a sword.

The clearness of Wesley's preaching was due to the fact that his mind was essentially logical. He spoke, not so much with a view to impress, but in order to persuade and convince. When he handles a subject, it is always in a straightforward manner. He discusses it with frankness, and explains things in the most lucid way; so that his hearers, however uncultivated they may be, cannot fail to be interested by a reasoning which they can follow easily. And it showed Wesley's respect for the people, whom he tried not to amuse with words, but to convince by good arguments.

His reasoning was ever sustained, and warmed up by appeals to the conscience and the heart. When he brought proofs forward, it was with a view to reach the springs of moral life. He explains truths in order to apply them; the conclusions of his sermons are often marvellously powerful. Some portions of his printed sermons and of his first "Appeal to Men of Reason" give an idea of that kind of eloquence, always self-possessed, direct and pressing, and full of pious aggressiveness.

This eloquence is still more apparent in many incidents of Wesley's ministry. It may be remembered what happened at Bolton when, in the midst of an angry

mob, he got upon a chair, and by means of a few words calmed their spirits. "The winds were hushed, and all was calm and still. My heart was filled with love, my eyes with tears, and my mouth with arguments. They were amazed, they were ashamed, they were melted down, they devoured every word."[1]

We may also mention the scenes that occurred at the beginning of his ministry: "An austere and animated eloquence, unsparing of the vices of those it was intended to reach, having no other aim but to denounce sin and awaken the conscience, such an eloquence created deep emotions in the midst of multitudes, until then insensible to everything that was not a life according to the flesh. The preacher's voice was often drowned in tears, sobs, and shrieks. Sinners seized with fear, or transported with enthusiasm, fell on the ground with almost convulsive tremblings."[2]

Surely words which, without being vehement, could produce such effects, must have been eloquent.

As an orator, Wesley was certainly inferior to Whitefield. He had not the impassioned vehemence of his friend, nor his "gift of tears." But, besides the logical faculty of which we have just been speaking, he possessed an incisiveness of speech which was lacking in his friend, so that he sometimes carried conviction to hearts that had remained unmoved by the appeals of his eloquent friend. John Nelson tells us that he had often listened to Whitefield's sermons, and had been charmed by them, as by strains of incomparable music; he admired the preaching and loved the preacher, but no more. Wesley's preaching produced a totally different effect. Let us hear the testimony of this eye-witness. "As soon as he had mounted the platform,"

[1] *Journal*, 18th October 1749.

[2] Rémusat, *Wesley et le Méthodisme*, p. 37.



JOHN WESLEY.
(*Painter unknown.*)

he says, "he stroked back his long hair, and turned toward the spot where I stood; I thought he fixed his eyes upon me. This single look filled me with inexpressible anguish: before he opened his mouth, my heart beat like the pendulum of a clock, and when he spoke, I thought his whole discourse was aimed at me."[1] In short, Wesley's preaching was just that which was wanted to awaken faith in souls and to raise up a Christian people. The matter of it was the everlasting gospel, and its mode that which could best transmit unimpaired the transforming and sanctifying power of the gospel.

The success of Wesley's preaching gives us a lofty idea of the Anglo-Saxon race, to whose moral renovation he devoted his life. The nation must have retained great and noble instincts in the depths of its moral being, otherwise such strong meat would never have suited it, and the success of such preaching would never have amounted to more than a momentary enthusiasm. Compare them with the people on the other side of the Channel at the same epoch. This one, polite and amiable, will hear no gospel except that of "the vicar of Savoy," and, without suspecting it, is on the verge of a bloody revolution: the other, rude and coarse, receives the teachings of Wesley and his coadjutors, and gradually rises in the scale of religion and morality till it is ready for the work to which God, in the order of His providence, has called it.

Wesley was perhaps still greater as an organising genius than as a preacher, and no man, in his century, came near him in that respect. Historians are unanimous in recognising his wonderful gifts as a founder and director. Buckle, who has best related the history of English civilisation, calls him "the first

[1] Nelson's *Journal*.

of theological statesmen."[1] The great Macaulay says of him: "His eloquence and logical acuteness might have made him eminent in literature, and his genius for government was not inferior to that of Richelieu."[2]

Lecky, the able author of the *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, thus estimates Wesley: "Few tasks are more difficult than the organisation into a permanent body of half-educated men. Wesley accomplished the task with an admirable mixture of tact, firmness, and gentleness; and the skill with which he framed the Methodist organisation is sufficiently shown by its later history."[3]

Wesley influenced the age in which he lived, not only by his tongue but by his pen; but he no more aimed at being a writer than he tried to be an orator. His only and constant ambition was to be understood; and for that reason he sought simplicity, not merely as a matter of taste, but from principle. "As for me," he writes in 1764, "I never think of my style at all; but just set down the words that come first. Only, when I transcribe anything for the press, then I think it my duty to see every phrase be clear, pure, and proper. Conciseness (which is now, as it were, natural to me) brings *quantum sufficit* of strength. If, after all, I observe any stiff expression, I throw it out, neck and shoulders. Clearness, in particular, is necessary for you and me; because we are to instruct people of the lowest understanding."[4]

In his extreme old age he still adhered to the same method. "I *could* even now write as floridly and rhetorically as even the admired Dr. B——; but I dare

[1] Buckle, *History of Civilisation in England*, vol. i.
[2] *Edinburgh Review*, 1850.
[3] Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. ii. p. 628.
[4] Wesley's *Works*, vol. xiii. p. 416.

not, because I seek the honour that cometh of God only . . . . I dare no more write in a *fine style* than wear a fine coat. But were it otherwise, had I time to spare, I should still write just as I do." [1]

Wesley's writings are not masterpieces, either for the thoughts or for the style; but he always wrote in a clear, close, and correct manner. A distinguished French writer thus judged him in this respect: "One could wish to find in him more depth or more brilliancy. But his style is good, and what he says is interesting and convincing. His ideas are simple, but expressed with clearness, and often in the happiest way, reason and feeling mixing judiciously together." [2] Wesley was too practical to be a sublime thinker. One of his friends, Dr. Whitehead, has remarked: "He was no great friend to metaphysical disquisitions," [3] and Wesley's writings confirm that opinion.[4] He was more of a logician than a metaphysician. De Rémusat says of him: "In a philosophical point of view, his mind appears best fitted for average ideas, and for moderate resolutions,—in a word, for common-sense notions. But, at the same time, he seems to feel most deeply the divine side of things, and he clings to it; he makes it his absorbing thought, and applies to it all the impassioned energy of his wisdom and virtue." [5]

If Wesley never produced "a single book satisfactory in a literary sense," [6] and if he did not give his attention to speculative theology, the explanation of these

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. vi. p. 186.

[2] Rémusat, *John Wesley et le Méthodisme*, p. 61.

[3] *Life of Wesley*, quoted in the *Wesley Memorial Volume*, p. 574.

[4] See on that point Dr. Rigg's *Living Wesley*, pp. 116–118. The author of that book shows that, although Wesley was not a metaphysician, he possessed great philosophical abilities.

[5] *John Wesley*, p. 61.

[6] Stephen Leslie, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*.

facts does not lie in the deficiencies of his intellectual powers, but in the necessities of his special mission. He had not leisure to become a writer, in the technical sense of the word; but that did not prevent his doing a great work with his pen. More than any of his contemporaries, he understood the importance of popular literature, and he was one of the pioneers of those great societies which have flooded the world with religious publications during the nineteenth century. Notwithstanding his incessant missionary labours, he found time to publish about two hundred volumes, composed, translated, or abridged by himself, and treating of theology, biography, history, philosophy, poetry, grammar, medicine, etc., and always from a popular point of view Large editions were sold at the lowest prices, and obtained an extensive circulation through the assistance of his preachers, whose influence contributed greatly to the formation of a taste for reading among his societies.

Wesley opened the way for religious tract societies by scattering, by hundreds of thousands, short and pointed appeals to various classes of readers,[1] or reflections on some public event.[2]

Assisted by his brother Charles, who deserves to be called the poet of Methodism, Wesley published a considerable number of volumes of poetry. His first collection of hymns appeared at Charleston, during his brief stay in Georgia, and other volumes of the same nature were published at short intervals for half a century. Dr. Osborn has registered fifty-four, and has reprinted them in thirteen volumes.[3] It would not be easy to discriminate the exact share each of the brothers

[1] *A Word to a Drunkard, to a Sabbath-breaker, to a Swearer, to a Street-walker, to a Smuggler, to a Condemned Malefactor.*

[2] *A Word to a Free-holder; Thoughts on the Earthquake at Lisbon.*

[3] *Proceedings of the Œcumenical Methodist Conference*, 1881, p. 394.

had in the composition of these numerous poems: most of the collections they published bore their joint names. The share of Charles was by far the largest, and there is no doubt that, as a poet, he was much more gifted than his brother. He occupies, with Isaac Watts, the supreme rank in England for sacred poetry.[1] Still, we must say that several of John Wesley's compositions are very valuable, and that his brother, who was essentially dependent on the inspiration of the moment, was much indebted to him for the revision of his hymns before publication. Their individual gifts, and their united activity, produced for the Revival a collection of sacred songs never perhaps equalled in any language.[2]

Wesley's printed sermons amount to one hundred and forty, and constitute a complete system of practical religion. It is in them we must look for the elements of Wesley's dogmatical and ethical views; and it would be difficult to find elsewhere so clear, so simple, so striking, and so practical an exposition of evangelical doctrines and morals. Volumes of sermons have, in general, a short-lived popularity; seldom are they read by successive generations. But Wesley's sermons are read now just as ever, not only because they are the official embodiment of the views of a large Christian community, but also by reason of their intrinsic value.

As a commentator, Wesley wrote "Notes" on the whole Bible. He prepared them, not for theologians, but for the common people. That explains the practical character of the work. The Notes on the Old Testament are scarcely more than extracts from Poole and Henry;

[1] Watts once said that he would give all he had ever written to be the author of Charles Wesley's *Wrestling Jacob*, which is really one of the finest lyrics in English literature.

[2] "The Wesleyan Lyric Poetry," by Abel Stevens, in the *Wesley Memorial Volume*, p. 464.

they were too quickly and summarily prepared, and have not been reprinted since. It was not so with the Notes on the New Testament; they possess a true exegetical value, and have passed through many editions. As a rule, Wesley follows Bengel, whom he first introduced to English readers.

He also published a long series of school-books, intended chiefly for the institution he had founded at Kingswood. It included English, French, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew grammars; new editions of the classics; a handbook of logic, a lexicon, a Roman history, a history of England, an ecclesiastical history after that of Mosheim, etc. We might also quote short fragments on electricity, which, in its first applications, filled him with enthusiasm; other fragments on moral or literary subjects; reviews of new books, etc.

Wesley also wrote pamphlets on political and social questions, which are neither numerous nor lengthy, but which nevertheless deal with most of the great problems that agitated the public mind in his time. "His great warm heart beat tenderly for suffering humanity, and against every evil which degraded the body, or dwarfed the mind, or cursed the soul, he wrote with warmth and freedom."[1] His ideas on political economy do not always agree with ours; but they are invariably on the side of generosity and charity.

The polemical writings of Wesley are of three kinds. In the first rank are those in which he answers objections raised against himself and his work. Such are principally his *Appeals*, etc., in which he pleads for the Methodist Revival with warmth, but also with dignity; these writings can bear comparison with the well-known Apologies of the Church in the early centuries. The second controversy in which Wesley was engaged gave

[1] *Wesley Memorial Volume*, p. 324.

birth to his remarkable treatise on Original Sin, which was an answer to Dr. John Taylor, an eminent Unitarian divine. His third controversy related to Calvinism; we have already spoken of it at some length, and it will be remembered that he left his friend Fletcher to play the first part in it.

Wesley also abridged no fewer than one hundred and seventeen volumes, including the fifty that constituted the Christian Library. Nowhere was the liberal spirit of the founder of Methodism better displayed than in the way in which he selected reading matter for his societies. The fathers of the Church, Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Ambrose, have a place there. The Church of England divines, Leighton, Tillotson, South, Jeremy Taylor, are to be found in the selection, as well as the Nonconformists, Charnock, Howe, Flavel, Baxter, Owen. Foreign writers, such as Pascal, Bengel, Arndt, helped to enrich this collection of books. Though large, it had not the pretension of including everything. But, such as it is, it was a most useful undertaking, and its success has not since been equalled.

We must conclude by mentioning that wonderful autobiography, the journals of Wesley, which embrace more than fifty years of uninterrupted activity. "The journals," says Punshon, "must be studied by any who would see the man. They are his unconscious autobiography. His versatility, his industry, his benevolence, his patience under insult, his indifference to human honour, his single-mindedness, his continual waiting upon Providence (which involved him in inconsistencies which he was not careful to reconcile, and which gloriously vindicate the disinterestedness of his life), his culture, his courtesy, his combination of the instincts of a gentleman with the blunt honesty of a son of toil, his true dignity, his womanly tenderness of feeling, his racy

wit, his discriminating criticism, his power of speech, his power of silence, all the elements which go to make up the symmetry of a well-compacted character,—if any want to find these, let them go, not to the pages of his biographers, who from various standpoints and with much acuteness have told the story of his life, but let them gather what he was and what the world owes to him from these records, as he daily transcribed them, in which he has shown himself, as in a glass, with the self-unconsciousness and transparency which only the truly great can afford to feel." [1]

Viewed as a whole, Wesley's character appears to us remarkably complete. He unites qualities which most commonly seem to exclude each other, but which in him are moulded into a harmonious whole. His life, like his mind, is crowded with multifarious occupations: one would say that several distinct personalities must have been blended together to constitute this one personality. That strong character bore, to an extreme old age, a burden of cares and labours which would have crushed any other man. Wesley, called of God to fulfil an extraordinary work, had been endowed with uncommon gifts. Is not this adaptation of the workman to the work due to a special Providence, showing, better than anything can do, the workings of God in human history?

[1] W. M. Punshon, "Wesley and his Literature," in the *Wesley Memorial Volume*. We are indebted to this paper for the classification of Wesley's literary works.

CHAPTER VII

WESLEY'S WORK AND ITS RESULTS

Wesley's work had a twofold result: the one direct, which has retained the name of Methodism, leading to the formation of a vast ecclesiastical system; the other more general, and embracing the whole nation, where it has revived and renewed evangelical Protestantism. It remains that we briefly describe this twofold influence.

Methodism was the special work of Wesley's life; by its theology and its organisation it satisfied the religious necessities created by the Revival.

Methodism was not, properly speaking, a theological movement: it was a revival of religious life by a decided return to apostolical teaching. Wesley's theology, which is still that of the Churches that claim him as their founder, agreed in its main feature with that of the English Reformation, as condensed in the Homilies and in the Thirty-nine Articles. Wesley prepared for the Methodist Churches of America some Articles of Faith which are, in fact, an abridgment of those of the Anglican Church. He reduced them to twenty-five, by omitting those that relate to the Descent of Jesus into Hell, to the Apocrypha, to the Apostles' Creed, and to those of Nicæa and Athanasius, to Baptismal Regeneration, to Predestination, to the Authority of the Church and of Councils, to the Ministry, to the Efficacy of Sacraments as independent of the moral character of the

men who administer them, to Ordinations of Bishops and Ministers, to Civil Power, etc. But Wesley did not bind his societies in England to any Confession of Faith, and they have not to this day adopted one; their doctrinal teaching is modelled after Wesley's sermons.

Fully harmonising with all other evangelical Churches in the fundamental doctrines of the Trinity, the Divinity of the Son and of the Spirit, the Incarnation of the Son, and the atoning character of His work, Wesley was equally explicit respecting the doctrines of the Fall and of Original Sin, and is wronged by those who accuse him of Semi-Pelagianism. To be convinced of this, it is only necessary to read his refutation of the views of Dr. Taylor, of Norwich. He taught that all mankind fell in Adam, and that all men are sinners, not simply by the imputation of Adam's sin, but by the inward depravation transmitted naturally from father to son.

Wesley totally rejects the Calvinistic doctrine of the limited extent of redemption. Believing the Scriptures to teach that Christ died for all, he always affirmed that "all may recover through the second Adam whatsoever they have lost through the first, and that no child of man perishes except by his own fault.[1] By thus declaring against Calvinism on the point of predestination, without in any degree weakening the doctrine of grace, Wesley rendered an immense service to the Revival. The evangelical theology of our times is greatly indebted to his teaching, to which, indeed, it is constantly approximating.

The doctrines concerning the attainment of salvation occupy the foremost place in Wesley's theology. "Our chief doctrines," he says, "which include all others, are repentance, faith, and holiness. The first of these we consider as the way to religion, the second as the gate,

[1] Stevens, vol. ii. p. 410.

the third, religion itself.[1] The Methodists attach special importance to these vital doctrines. True, they have introduced no new ideas upon these subjects, but they have embodied them in more precise and practical formulas; and by bringing them down to the level of the humblest intelligence, have opened up their way to the consciences of men. Repentance retains, in Wesley's view, its profound significance and lofty character. It is not a vain formality, but a deep sorrow for having offended God, manifesting itself in "fruits meet for repentance." Evangelical repentance must always precede justifying faith.

Faith is, in Wesley's system as in St. Paul's, the sole means of obtaining salvation. "It is not only," says he, "an entire assent to Christ's gospel; it is a complete repose in the blood of Christ, a trust in the merits of His life, death, and resurrection, a coming to Him as our expiatory Sacrifice and our Life, who gave Himself for us and lives in us." [2]

Everything in salvation—justification, regeneration, sanctification—is obtained by faith. Justification is simply the pardon of our sins: it completely changes a sinner's relationship to God. But it always goes with regeneration: "The former relating to that great work which God does *for us*, in forgiving our sins; the latter, to the great work which God does *in us*, in renewing our fallen nature. In order of *time*, neither of these is before the other; in the moment we are justified by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Jesus, we are also 'born of the Spirit'; but in order of *thinking*, as it is termed, justification precedes the new birth. We first conceive His wrath to be turned away, and then His

[1] *Principles of a Methodist further Explained. Works*, vol. viii. p. 414.

[2] Sermon on Salvation by Faith, preached before the University of Oxford in 1738. *Works*, vol. v. p. 9.

Spirit to work in our hearts."[1] Wesley defines regeneration as "that great change which God works in the soul when He brings it into life, when He raises it from the death of sin to the life of righteousness."[2] In regeneration, the Holy Spirit renews his very nature, changes his heart, and admits him into the family of God by the bestowment of the "Spirit of adoption."

Sanctification, Wesley believed, and so do all evangelical Christians, is the work of purification begun in the soul at the moment of regeneration. "Sanctification," he says, "begins when we begin to believe; and in proportion as our faith increases, our holiness increases also." Wesley was early convinced, by the study of the Scriptures, that this work of inward purification and conquest over sin is to be fully accomplished in this life, and this was the doctrine which he preached under the scriptural names of entire sanctification and Christian perfection. He describes this great blessing in the following terms: "It is to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength; which implies that no evil disposition, none contrary to love, remains in the soul, and that every thought, word, and action is governed by pure love." The Christian perfection, then, to be realised in this life, is the perfection of love: Christians who by faith attain this happy state "are not thereby exempt from ignorance and error. We have no more right to expect that a man should be infallible than that he should be omniscient. None will be freed from infirmities and temptations till his spirit returns to God."[3]

Another doctrine which occupies an important place

[1] Sermon on The New Birth. *Works*, vol. vi. p. 65.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

[3] Wesley's *Sermons* (*passim*), also his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, and J. Fletcher's *Last Check*.

in Wesley's theology is that of the witness of the Spirit. He defines it as "an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ has loved me, and given Himself for me; and that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God,"[1] Whilst the majority of Christian Churches admit that believers in general can obtain a more or less satisfactory assurance of their salvation by appropriating the promises in God's Word, and by bearing "the fruits of the Spirit," Wesley taught that every true Christian can claim a direct witness and a positive assurance of his salvation.

This witness of the Spirit was not, in Wesley's view, the unconditional assurance of final salvation. He rejected the Calvinist doctrine of final perseverance as he rejected unconditional predestination, and to this he was compelled by a process of rigorous logic: asserting the freedom and responsibility of man at the outset of his religious life, he could not afterwards despoil him of these perilous prerogatives. The possibility of apostasy, so clearly taught in the Scriptures, is consequently a warning to all.[2]

Such is, in its main features, the theology which formed the basis of Wesley's work. Clear, simple, and practical, it contained within itself all the elements of success. Expounded in Wesley's terse and transparent style, and propagated by his admirable sermons, it became the grand subject of his preachers' study, and

[1] Sermon on The Witness of the Spirit, in Wesley's *Works*, vol. v. p. 115.

[2] Wesley, who had a constant dread of Antinomianism, soon forsook the use of the words "imputed righteousness," and said, "It is the seeing so many deplorable instances of these expressions which makes us sparing in the use of them." Sermon on The Lord our Righteousness, *Works*, vol. v. p. 234.

the theme of their ministrations, and afforded his societies solid nutriment. The best proof of its efficacy is to be found in the great religious movement which we have traced in this book, and which may be said to be the result of the faithful preaching of the evangelical doctrines which Wesley had resuscitated.

In giving Methodism a theology which simply re-affirmed the great doctrines of experimental Christianity, Wesley laid a broad and stable foundation for the edifice he reared upon it. We have now to contemplate the edifice itself, *i.e.* the organisation of Methodism, such as it had gradually evolved in the course of over half a century. The basis of this organisation is the society, properly so called, comprising the body of believers who, in each locality, have embraced the principles of Methodism. The sole condition of membership in this society is "a desire to flee from the wrath to come"; no adhesion to doctrinal formularies whatsoever is required; and in order to continuance in it, it is necessary to evidence that "desire" by Christian conduct, and to maintain Christian communion by attendance at the class-meeting.

The class-meeting, which is the very keystone of Methodism, is an excellent method of exercising the "cure of souls," at the same time that it is a realisation, in the bosom of the Church, of that brotherly fellowship so well understood in the apostolic age, and so deplorably neglected in our own. A class is usually composed of about twelve persons, who are placed under the guidance of a leader, generally a layman, selected on account of his Christian experience and judgment. His business is to watch over the spiritual state of those committed to his care, not only by meeting them weekly to enquire how their souls prosper, but also by visiting them at their own homes. The class-meeting is thus, it will be

seen, the nucleus of the Church; and, owing to its simple organisation, it has often of itself supplied the place of other ordinances. By dividing pastoral labour, it has rendered it easier, and at the same time made the exercise of discipline more thorough.

By means of these weekly meetings, an easy method was also provided of raising the necessary funds for the maintenance of the work; and the leader, whose business it was to give an account of the religious state of the members to the preachers, also gave an account of their moneys to the local stewards. Thus the fiscal system was extremely simple, and yet generally efficacious.

Another custom which Wesley adopted in his class-meetings was borrowed from the ancient Churches. Each member of society received periodically a ticket, bearing a Scripture text or some appropriate engraving, and inscribed with his own name and that of the preacher from whom he received it. This quarterly ticket served as a token of membership, and was to be presented at certain meetings of the Church, in order to admission.

Besides the class-meeting proper, which was for all the members, the societies had other meetings, as the band-meetings, in which a more intimate association of the members was encouraged, but which, being optional, gradually fell into desuetude; the love-feasts, in which all the classes of a given society met together to break bread, according to the custom of the primitive Church, and held free conference on their Christian experience; the watch-nights, meetings for spiritual edification, which were protracted till midnight, and which were at first held monthly, about the time of the full moon, but now are only celebrated on the last day of the year, for the purpose of spending in prayer the hour that marks the close of the old year and the beginning of the new; the renewal of the covenant, a special service held the

first Sunday in the year, in which the members devote themselves afresh to God by a solemn vow.

The administration of the Lord's Supper to the societies was as yet rare, owing to the small number of ordained ministers who laboured among them; but this anomaly did not long exist, and the societies soon attained the full emancipation for which their founder had prepared them.

On the whole, we have here a remarkable assemblage of means of grace, all tending powerfully to develop the spiritual life of the members, and to establish on sure foundations the unity of the societies. Quarterly or monthly meetings of the office-bearers of the Church were gradually established, at which the spiritual and material interests of the work of God were discussed.

Besides the class-leaders, there were other office-bearers of various kinds. The trustees were those who undertook the management of the trust-estates. The stewards received the various moneys contributed by the societies, and disbursed them according to their needs: their office in some degree resembles that of the deacons in other Churches. The local preachers were pious laymen who, possessing the gift of utterance, consented to devote their Sabbaths, and often their week-nights, to the work of the gospel, without any recompense for their services. These useful labourers have multiplied in number, and become important auxiliaries, by whose aid Methodism is enabled with moderate resources to extend its evangelistic labours over a large field, with a facility that other Churches may well envy.

We have narrated at some length the humble origin of the itinerant ministry, that institution which, more than any other, has won for Methodism its position in the present day. It occupies a capital place in its

organisation, and of itself would suffice to prove the original and yet providential character of the movement. This valiant militia, which was reckoned by hundreds at the time of Wesley's death, was constantly in motion: he made itinerancy the very law of its existence, and by this means was enabled not only to stimulate the zeal of his ministers, but to multiply their operations, and to achieve great results with a small number of men. He had divided Great Britain into circuits; the preacher's sojourn in each circuit was never to exceed three years, and at each Conference he might be called upon to change his sphere of labour.[1]

During Wesley's life he was himself the living bond of this extensive organisation. At his death the Annual Conference, which hitherto had been only a consultative assembly, inherited that position, and became the supreme court of Methodism. Other modifications, chiefly in matters of detail, arose in the course of time: such changes have not in any degree cramped, but rather tended to consolidate, the work of Wesley's life.

This work has proved its strength by a duration of a century and a half, during which period it has followed the law of an ever-widening progression. While some of its features—as, for instance, those derived from Wesley's ecclesiastical position—have not escaped criticism, all impartial judges are compelled to admit that, as a whole, it is admirably adapted to the ends for which it was designed.

"The peculiarity of Methodism," says M. Cucheval-Clarigny, a French writer, "and that which has made it so successful, is that it never leaves the Christian to

[1] The system of itinerancy with a maximum of three years has been maintained faithfully down to our day; but there is now a strong tendency in the Methodist Churches to apply the principle of itinerancy with more regard to circumstances.

himself, but continually supplies him with spiritual aids. In the absence of the regular ministry, the most isolated member of the Church finds counsel, encouragement, and consolation from the exhorter or the class-leader. While the wisely graduated hierarchy of Methodism enables it to extend its influence to the highest grades of civilisation, by the same arrangement it reaches the lowest strata of society."[1]

The missions founded by the Wesleyan Church of Great Britain, and which remain under her immediate control, in Europe, India, China, and Africa, involve an annual expenditure of £150,000 to £160,000. The work in Polynesia, the most glorious trophy of Wesleyan missions, is now connected with the Australian Conference.

We have, in the preceding pages, given an account of the origin of the first Methodist missions in Wesley's lifetime. Dr. Coke, to whom he had entrusted the organisation of American Methodism, was the right man to appoint as director of the missionary enterprises of the Church; and he devoted to this work his science, his means, his life itself. The mission in the West Indies, which raised the moral level of thousands of slaves, and hastened the day of their emancipation, was speedily extended through his influence. It spread, in 1814, to British Guiana in South America. When Coke died, in that same year, it already numbered 31 missionaries and 17,000 communicants. It has now 109 missionaries and 53,000 communicants. To Dr. Coke belongs also the honour of founding the Ceylon mission, although he died on board the ship which was carrying him there with seven other missionaries. It was in 1817 that the missionary work began in India itself. The first Methodist mission in Africa was begun in 1811, at

[1] *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, 15th of August 1859.

Sierra Leone; ten years later, one was established in Senegambia, and another in 1835 on the Gold Coast. One of the missionaries who went out with Coke in his last journey, in 1814, was left at the Cape of Good Hope, and it was he who founded the first Methodist station in the south of Africa, and thus began a work which now includes about two hundred ministers and forty thousand communicants, reckoning natives as well as colonists. The mission in Polynesia began in 1815 with New South Wales. Five years later, it extended to Tasmania; two years afterwards, to the Tonga Islands; and the following year, to New Zealand. Twelve years after, it reached the Fiji Islands; three years later, the work began in the south of Australia; and the year after, in the west. The moral victories which have since then been gained in those parts of the Southern hemisphere are among the brightest which the history of modern missions has registered. Wesleyan missionaries have conquered to faith and civilisation entire groups of islands formerly peopled by ferocious and cannibal tribes.

At the death of Dr. Coke, who had made the extension of Wesleyan missions the great aim of his life, it became necessary to give that work a regular organisation, in order to ensure its prosperity. The Wesleyan Missionary Society was formed in 1816, and soon after numerous auxiliary branches were established all over England. This society, which has so considerably enlarged the work begun by Wesley and Coke, is closely connected with the British Conference, and constitutes one of its permanent and executive committees.

From the Wesleyan Church, which Wesley had founded, have sprung in England several smaller branches which have preserved the distinctive principles of Methodism, although they differ between themselves in some details

of their organisation. They are the following: the Methodist New Connexion, established in 1797; the Bible Christians, who were organised in 1815; the Primitive Methodist Connexion; and the United Methodist Free Churches, forming a body of various Churches which had separated from the parent stem, and which dates from 1857.

American Methodism, organised as a Church by Wesley, has had a more rapid growth than the mother Church in England. Led by its great missionary bishops, Asbury and MacKendree, it hastened with apostolic zeal to the conquest of those new and extensive territories which were added yearly by the settlers to the land occupied by the thirteen States which founded the Union.[1] At the beginning of the nineteenth century this new church in sixteen years saw the number of its adherents increasing from 15,000 to 64,000. Seven years after, it reached 144,000; in 1817, 224,000; in 1827, 381,000; in 1837, 658,000. In the following ten years, in consequence of the separation resulting from the slavery question, the number of members fell to 636,000; but in 1857 it rose to 820,000; ten years later it had reached 1,146,000; and now (1898) it is 2,675,035. The centenary of American Methodism was celebrated in 1866, and a special fund for the extension of its various works was raised by the Church; it amounted to more than £1,860,000. Since 1872 its general Conference, which meets once in the four years, and is the supreme council of the Church, is composed of an equal number of ministers and laymen. American Methodism has a

[1] For details on this extension of Methodism in the western regions of the United States, we may be allowed to refer our readers to our books—*The Pioneer Preachers in the West of America* and *A Missionary in California*.

Missionary Society, founded in 1819, with an income which amounted in 1880 to about £136,000. A certain proportion, about half, of these resources is employed to support missionary enterprises in Africa, Mexico, South America, China, India, Japan, Bulgaria, Scandinavia, Germany, and Italy. The remainder is used for missions at home, among the various nationalities which constitute the population of the United States.

In American, as in English Methodism, schisms have not been wanting. The chief of these was that of 1844, which was brought about by the slavery question. The Methodists of the South, after vainly attempting to obtain the abolition of the rule of the Church forbidding the sale and purchase of slaves, separated from those of the North. By this rupture the Church lost nearly half a million of members and 1345 travelling ministers. The Methodist Episcopal Church South, which sprang from that schism, has now 5837 ministers and 1,442,665 members. It is to be hoped that, all cause of contention between these two branches of American Methodism having ceased with slavery, the time may not be far distant when the union will be effected, and no trace left of former struggles.

Other branches of American Methodism have a certain importance; they are—the Protestant Methodists, the Evangelical Association, the United Brethren, etc.

The emancipated negroes of the United States form distinct Churches, and are divided into two large connexions—the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the African Methodist Episcopal Church of Zion. These Churches number together about 1,115,000 members.

It has been calculated that the various Methodist Churches in the world, which hold the doctrines preached by Wesley, and retain the characteristic features of his

ecclesiastical discipline, number 43,428 ministers and more than 7,000,000 members. It is no exaggeration to estimate at 25,000,000 the number of the inhabitants of the globe who are at the present day under the religious influence of the disciples of Wesley.

The unity of Methodism was first solemnly manifested at the Methodist Œcumencial Conference held in City Road Chapel, London, in September 1881, where 400 delegates, representing 28 branches of Methodism, met to confer on subjects of common interest. A second Œcumenical Conference met at Washington (United States) in October 1891.

Remarkable as are the direct results of Methodism, they are not the only ones; we must remember how greatly civilisation in general, and the moral condition of the Anglo-Saxon race, are indebted to its influence.

All historians at the present day agree, that while the last century was for continental Europe a period of decay and dissolution, in Great Britain it witnessed one of those beneficial crises which regenerate a nation's life and open up an era of indefinite progress. In fact, while everywhere else convictions were being stifled and characters poisoned by the deadly breath of scepticism, this great people, in their solitary island-home, were rebuilding, step by step, the tottering edifice of faith and morals.

This regeneration of England was the especial work of Methodism, and impartial history at length recognises the fact. While the sagacious Priestley observed in his day, that "Methodism has not only Christianised but civilised that part of the nation which had been overlooked by a clergy too careful of its dignity,"[1] Macaulay, in our own day, makes light of "some writers of books

[1] Letter to Burke.

called Histories of England in the reign of George II., in which the rise of Methodism is not mentioned."[1] The more recent English historians have not followed their example. Lecky devotes more than one hundred and twenty pages of his *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* to the study of that religious movement, and he affirms that "from about the middle of the eighteenth century a reforming spirit was once more abroad, and a steady movement of moral ascent may be detected. The influence of Pitt in politics, and the influence of Wesley and his followers in religion, were the earliest and most important agencies in affecting it."[2]

J. R. Green, in his *History of the English People*,[3] says the same things, and attributes to Methodism the deep work of reformation effected in the Church of England and in the nation at large. Even in France, writers who have studied the history of the eighteenth century have generally done justice to the paramount influence of Wesley and his work. Edmond Scherer calls Methodism "a religious movement which has changed the face of England."[4] The testimony of Cornelius de Witt is quite as cordial: "If the England of to-day no longer resembles the England of the early part of the eighteenth century, it is mainly due to John Wesley."[5] We may also cite the opinion of Saint-Marc-Girardin: "Wesley and his disciples revived the Christian spirit even in the breasts of those who opposed them."[6] Lastly, we may quote Charles de Rémusat: "The work and life of the promoters of Methodism had an indirect influence,

[1] Stevens, *History of Methodism*, vol. ii. p. 514.
[2] Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. ii. p. 517.
[3] *Short History of the English People*, p. 720.
[4] *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, 15th of May 1861.
[5] *La société française et la société anglaise au XVIII^e siècle*, p. 237.
[6] *Journal des Débats*, 9th of November 1861.

and, in the estimation of the historian, a greater one than even that of their preaching; and in due time they produced, in the whole of Great Britain, and in nearly all countries of British origin, a religious movement which gave the lie to the prophesyings of observers like Voltaire and Montesquieu."[1]

The moral renovation of England, in which Wesley and Methodism had so large a share, spread from the lowest strata of society till it reached the highest. Methodism brought with it light and hope. Religion, which had lost its influence on the people, became the leaven transforming a nation. Manners were softened, and a thirst for knowledge imparted, even among the colliers long addicted to vice. In the working classes, men but lately rough and ungovernable became, under the influence of evangelical preaching, steady and industrious, fond of their home and full of self-respect. Whilst their mind was quickened by reading and meditation, their circumstances improved through thriftiness and sobriety, and in many cases they rose from poverty to comfort and even to fortune.

As they rose in the scale of morals, the lower classes necessarily exerted an influence on the upper. The moral standard of the nation had risen so high that it of necessity imposed itself even on that corrupt aristocracy which, at first sight, seemed so incorrigible. Under the pressure of the middle and lower classes, which rose rapidly in morality and dignity, it was absolutely necessary that the upper classes should make proportionate progress, if they wished to retain their ascendency.

The Anglican Church had long been accessory to the irregularities of the nobility, and had even encouraged religious indifference. But the Revival introduced into

[1] *John Wesley et le Méthodisme*, p. 64.

its ranks such men as Perronet, Fletcher, Grimshaw, Romaine, Venn, Berridge, Newton,—the forerunners of that evangelical party which in our century has exercised so great an influence on the religious and political state of Great Britain.

A similar change was brought about in the Dissenting Churches, which, although not so hopelessly decayed, had lost their influence upon the masses. They became so imbued with the spirit of the Methodist movement that they recovered their ancient zeal, and took an important part in the work of evangelisation.

This grand work of reformation, in which the English people renewed its youth, pervaded every circle,—social, political, intellectual, and moral. A chaste and healthy literature took the place of the impure productions of the previous age. Richardson, Goldsmith, De Foe, Johnson, and others, in creating a purer popular literature, doubtless contributed to this great revolution.

A great revolution truly, which, following on the heels of the political Revolution of the previous century, has created modern England, that nation which has set the world an example of the power and permanence of liberal institutions based on the foundation of the gospel.

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